THE TRUTH ABOUT PUBLISHING

By Stanley Unwin

'I have learnt about 500 things from it.' —Arnold Bennett.

'Every author should be compelled to read it.'—Lewis Melville.

Written with authority, conciseness, and humor, by one of the most successful of the younger British publishers, this amazingly frank and comprehensive book is the first complete text-book of publishing practice. Calculated to be of greatest practical value to publishers, authors, and booksellers, it is made especially interesting to the American public by the inclusion of pungent editorial notes by Mr. Ferris Greenslet of Houghton Mifflin Company, with special information about American conditions.

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BY

STANLEY UNWIN

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TO

THOSE OF MY FELLOW PUBLISHERS WHO
BELIEVE IN COÖPERATION

It is by books that mind speaks to mind, by books the world's intelligence grows, books are the tree of knowledge, which has grown into and twined its branches with those of the tree of life, and of their common fruit men eat and become as gods knowing good and evil.

C. Kegan Paul

PREFACE TO THE AMERICAN EDITION

In The Truth about Publishing Mr. Stanley Unwin, one of the most successful of younger British publishers, presents for the first time anything approaching a complete textbook of sound publishing practice. The methods of Mr. Unwin's own House, upon which his book is in the main based, differ but slightly from those of the larger American Houses. In preparing the American edition for the press, it has therefore been only necessary to translate pounds, shillings, and pence into dollars and cents in certain instances, to omit passages of exclusively British application, and to append a few footnotes to paragraphs dealing with matters in which there are significant divergences between British and American customs.

Ferris Greenslet

PREFACE

'Fools rush in where angels fear to tread!' Whether past generations of publishers were angels may be doubted, but it is certain that they would never have dreamed of exposing the inner workings of a publisher's business, and they would unquestionably have thought any one who did so a fool. Probably their judgment was sound: whether it still holds good will soon be decided.

In the meantime, whether this attempt proves premature or not, the indications are clear that the days of 'secrecy' and 'mystery' in publishing are past, and that in the near future, at any rate, all business activities will be increasingly thrown open to the light of day.

As a first attempt, this book will, I trust, receive the indulgence granted to maiden efforts. I hope, indeed, that it may be regarded as a rough draft, and that I may receive suggestions for its improvement. It was, of necessity, the product of odd moments, and I am conscious of its deficiencies.

It has been my endeavour to examine controversial questions as impartially as possible, and always with the hope of finding common ground, rather than points of disagreement.

The growing commercialization of literature — inevitable though it may be — does not tend to promote more harmonious relations between authors and publishers. It

is based on the assumption that manuscripts and books are mere commodities; dead, not living things. Such an assumption ignores the peculiar and indeed parental relationship of the author to his work, the realization of which is the beginning of wisdom in a publisher.

I hope that in my zeal to explain the publisher's difficulties I have not shown any lack of sympathy with authors. I can truthfully say that this book would have been a good deal easier to write had I not seen their point of view so clearly.

It was primarily in the hope of helping inexperienced writers to understand some of the technicalities of publishing and thereby to assist them that I allowed myself to be persuaded by several of their number to provide this brief account of book publishing.

If I have succeeded in making the path of the beginner a little smoother, and contributed in any way towards the promotion of pleasanter and more intelligent relations between authors and publishers, I shall be well rewarded.

I should like to take this opportunity of thanking the many friends who have helped me with their encouragement and suggestions in the preparation of this book, and, in particular, the Reverend Ernest Charles, of Malvern Link, to whose constant stimulus its early completion is due.

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Where are you going to, my pretty maid?
'I'm going to publish, sir,' she said.
Perhaps you've a fortune, my pretty maid?
'My verse is my fortune, sir,' she said.
Then you'd better not try it, my pretty maid;
There's an item for printing, and, when it is paid,
There's 'Commission on sales,' oh, innocent maid!
In your rural retreat have you heard of THE TRADE?
Oh, where *are you going to, my pretty maid.*

From 'Measured Steps,' by Ernest Radford

INTRODUCTORY

PUBLISHERS are much-abused people. It is doubtful whether, in proportion to their numbers, any other class in the community comes in for quite so much criticism, or has so much publicity given to its every shortcoming. The sins of the blackest of the flock are visited on the whitest, and until recently a study of the columns of the 'Author' left one with the impression that all publishers, at all times and upon all occasions, were actuated wholly, solely, and necessarily by evil motives. The case for the publisher was never heard. Recently, however, with the advent of that interesting hybrid, the author-publisher or the publisher-author, and the founding of the Society of Bookmen, a slight reaction has set in. It is no violent swing of the pendulum, and there is no danger of any excess of virtue being attributed to publishers in general, but writers have been found ready to point out that if publishers are no better than their fellows, they are not, as a whole, any worse. In view of their environment, it would be surprising if they were, for it would be difficult to maintain that an atmosphere of books and the company of authors and booksellers were demoralizing.

This welcome change of attitude adds a further reason for removing what has rightly been described as the air of mystery which surrounds publishers' activities. There is, in fact, nothing very mysterious about a publisher's office,

and the contrary impression tends to breed suspicion and is unquestionably responsible for some quite unnecessary misunderstandings. There is urgent need for a greater knowledge, both by authors and public, of the problems that have to be faced.

The publisher's task is no simple one, and the whole process of book publication is vastly more complicated than it was even a generation ago. It calls to-day for technical knowledge of a much wider range than heretofore, and for a very much higher standard of efficiency. A *flair* for what the public wants (or can be made to think it wants), sound literary taste and critical judgment, a keen desire to publish good literature, are all most excellent and desirable things; but other qualities are even more essential for the day-to-day routine work of a publisher's office.

This will, I think, become clear if I set forth as I propose to do, as simply as possible, the whole process of book publishing from start to finish. My object is not to teach publishing (it cannot be learnt so easily as that!), but to give information to those outside the trade, and particularly to all devoted to literature, whether as writers or readers.

THE TRUTH ABOUT PUBLISHING

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CHAPTER I

THE ARRIVAL OF MANUSCRIPTS

LET us begin at the beginning: the arrival of the manuscripts — the solicited and the unsolicited — which pour in daily upon the successful and the old-established publishers, at times in almost overwhelming numbers. For that is the real beginning, as I never cease to tell prospective authors, and not, as is generally assumed, an interview with the publisher at which the author holds forth — often at great length — about the merits of his work. Such interviews are almost invariably a waste of time, and should be deferred until the publisher has had an opportunity of studying the manuscript. An unknown author, who insists upon a personal interview beforehand with a principal of the firm, is prejudicing, not advancing, his cause. The best and the only introduction needed to a book publisher is a marketable manuscript, or, if not readily marketable, a work of intrinsic merit. If any explanations are called for, they should be stated as concisely as possible in a letter accompanying the manuscript. That letter, which will probably be handed or sent to the 'reader' with the manuscript, and will subsequently be attached to his report,

affords an opportunity to summarize any relevant facts likely to influence the publisher's judgment. A statement that the author's aunt thinks him a budding genius is not helpful, but the information that she could ensure the adoption of the work as a textbook in several important schools or colleges might be.

The fact that Mr. Smith has promised to review the book (if published!) in the 'Daily Blank' is probably not worth mentioning at that stage, because the publisher is accustomed to having most of his books noticed by Mr. Jones, if not by Mr. Smith, in the 'Daily Blank,' and is therefore not impressed. But the statement that 2457 copies of the author's previous book were sold in India in the first six months following publication, because of his wide connections over there, would be of great significance.

Now as to the manuscript itself — first and most essential, it should have the author's name and address clearly written upon it, preferably both at the beginning and the end. If there is a folder or outer case it should also bear the title of the manuscript and the author's name. This sounds obvious, but more than half the manuscripts that reach a publisher bear no address upon them, and an appreciable number no author's name; still more remarkable, some have no title or title-page.

I have said that an author's manuscript is the best introduction, but that presupposes that some little attention has been given to the condition of the manuscript. An author would not, I imagine, feel it essential to visit a publisher in a new silk hat and a coat of the latest cut, but most authors at least would consider it undesirable to approach

a publisher in a dirty and incoherent condition. But that is, in effect, what they do when they submit a dirty and dilapidated manuscript, in bad writing, or so besprinkled with corrections and alterations as to be indecipherable. Any manuscript that has been much handled is bound to show signs of wear, but if the first and last sheets are occasionally retyped — and all manuscript should be typed, unless the handwriting is unusually copperplate — there will be nothing to prejudice a reader. Theoretically, of course, nothing concerns the reader except the substance of the work; but he would scarcely be human were he not influenced, unconsciously at any rate, by the illegibility of the manuscript. It is a purely utilitarian standard I advocate for manuscripts, i.e., fitness for their purpose. A spotless, typed manuscript is a nightmare to all who handle it, if it consists of several hundred unattached sheets or if it is on paper of some awkward size. Ordinary quarto paper is the recognized size, and there would seem to be no need in most cases to depart from it. Stiff, slippery paper or thin tissue paper should be avoided, and the typing should, of course, be on one side of the paper only and be in double spacing. It is wiser to fasten together each chapter, not binding the whole manuscript up in one tight fastening, which makes the book irksome to read and tiresome to turn over. A complete manuscript tastefully bound in morocco would fill me with as much distrust as would an overdressed dandy. I should feel confident that that was the only form in which the manuscript was destined to be preserved.

In many publishing businesses the receiving of manu-

scripts and the recording of their dispatch to readers is entrusted exclusively to one assistant, because divided responsibility would be fatal. It is this assistant's function —

(1) to acknowledge receipt of the manuscript on a form setting forth that, whilst every care is taken of manuscripts, the publisher does not hold himself responsible in case of accidental loss, etc.;
(2) to record the day of receipt and the name and address of the sender;
(3) to enter any special instructions regarding the return of the manuscript, e.g., whether sufficient postage had been prepaid to cover registration;
(4) to fill in the name of the reader to whom it is referred;
(5) to record the date on which it is referred to the reader, and the date of his report;
(6) to make an independent record of any illustrations which accompanied the manuscript as it is wiser to treat them as a separate item.

So important is it that this record should be both complete and accurate, that many publishers would never handle a manuscript until it had been properly entered. The first thing I do after the departure of a visitor who has left a manuscript with me, is to send it to the proper department, so that it may start its journey aright — and I should do this, even though I intended taking the manuscript home with me that evening. Even when the utmost punctiliousness is observed, manuscripts go astray; and, in view of the number that pass in and out of a big publisher's office, it is astonishing, not that a few are temporarily mislaid, but that it is a rare event in a well-managed concern for one to be irretrievably lost.

The most frequent cause of trouble is two manuscripts being treated as one in the packing department — a thing that is liable to occur in rush hours, when two short manuscripts which resemble one another happen to be placed together. On the only two occasions when I really thought a manuscript was lost, this had occurred, and in both cases it took over three months and more than a hundred letters to track down the missing manuscript. Every one to whom the manuscript could conceivably have been sent was written to. In one of the cases, the recipient was abroad, and our letter and the parcel had remained unopened; but in the other — will anybody believe it? — the author who received the strayed manuscript deliberately kept it and said nothing; in order, as he boasted, to see how long it would be before we found out!

The manuscript, having been duly entered, has now to be read, and the exact procedure varies according to the publisher's organization and the nature of the manuscript. Some publishers keep a permanent reader or readers on the staff, others have outside readers. Some manuscripts require no 'reading' at all in the ordinary sense. If Professor Einstein writes a new book on 'Relativity,' his publisher does not need to inquire whether he is an authority on the subject, or to take advice about the scientific competence of the work. Similarly, manuscripts by established clients of the firm, or solicited manuscripts, do not need any 'sifting.' They are usually accepted without more ado, and are generally looked through at once by one of the heads of the firm.

Where there is a reader on the staff, the task of sorting

the manuscripts is apt to fall upon him — those on special subjects are sent to specialist readers; e.g., works on philosophy would be sent to some leading professor of philosophy in whose judgment the publisher had learnt to place confidence.

In the case of my own firm, every manuscript which comes in is actually handled by one or other of the directors. In almost every case there is in addition a written report from, at any rate, one independent outside reader. In doubtful cases there may be as many as three or four written opinions. These reports are filed with the relevant correspondence, so that they are readily available years later, if need be.

The quality of the unsolicited manuscript is not high. The large proportion of hopeless and indifferent material makes any merit stand out. Under present conditions, it is improbable that any really promising manuscript would fail to find a publisher in the long run, for the competition to detect any signs of genius is far too great.

The idea that publishers return manuscripts unread is a delusion that I suppose will never be eradicated from some minds; but that it is a delusion a day spent in any competent book publisher's office would effectually demonstrate. Some authors have most elaborate devices whereby they can prove that such and such a page has never been read. They overlook Dr. Johnson's wise remark that 'it is unnecessary to eat the whole ox to find out whether the beef is tough.'

Others are sufficiently foolish to submit a brief article on, let us say, 'Should a girl's hair be shingled?' to a publisher

of learned historical and philosophical works. How long, I wonder, do they think it takes that publisher to decide that the manuscript is unsuitable?

My own firm publishes no magazines, but scarcely a week goes by without our receiving manuscripts much too short for anything but magazine publication. Even some literary agents, who obviously should know better, are not altogether immune from similar absent-mindedness, though in their case it is more often failure to single out the particular firm or firms most likely to be interested in any given class of book. I recall, in particular, a manuscript by a very distinguished novelist, whose name is a household word, which was never published merely because his very autocratic agent offered it to almost every publisher in London except the two who would have taken it. The author's views were unpopular (it was during the war), and the two firms publishing for the unpopular minority were never approached. When they learned of the existence of the manuscript the time for publication had gone by. I would therefore take the opportunity of impressing upon authors the wisdom of Mr. W. B. Maxwell's advice to study publishers' lists and to take pains themselves to choose a suitable firm for their work.

Few authors, I imagine, realize that on an average each manuscript received by a publisher, whether rejected (as the majority are bound to be) or accepted, costs the publisher *at least* ten dollars; and, indeed, a great deal more, if the working expenses could be accurately computed. If the manuscripts summarily rejected on the ground of hopeless illiteracy, unsuitability of subject or length, were disre-

garded in arriving at the average, the cost per manuscript would be still larger. But, despite this fact, it is rarely that a publisher will refuse to consider a manuscript that sounds at all possible. There could, I think, be no better evidence of the keenness of the competition to secure good literary material.

The number of people who consider themselves fully qualified for the post of publisher's reader is unlimited. The number of those really competent to fulfil that function is extraordinarily small. It is not easy to define precisely what is required. Some firms would say 'ability to spot winners,' and leave it at that; but a list consisting of nothing but Tarzans and Rosaries, though highly profitable, would be a depressing business. To most publishers who are keen on their job, the sound literary judgment of an Arnold Bennett would be the first and chief ingredient in an ideal reader, though they would not underrate both the necessity and desirability of throwing in a little of Bennett's commercial acumen and *flair*.

I imagine that the best and most successful readers, almost without exception, have either had actual experience in a publisher's office, or have acquired an intimate knowledge of publishers' needs. Absence of such experience greatly lessens a reader's value and involves endless additional work for the publisher in explaining why this is practicable and not that, and, in fact, in teaching the reader his job, which is governed by technical and commercial, as well as literary considerations

The late Mr. Henry Holt prepared a most elaborate 'report form' for the guidance of his readers, containing

minute instructions as to how many marks might be awarded for any particular quality in a manuscript; e.g., Clearness of Style 9, Originality of Subject 7, Originality of Treatment 7, Holding Power 7, etc. It is an extremely interesting document, but nothing so complicated is ever likely to be taken into general use.

Publishers' readers seldom, if ever, get the praise they deserve. The public knows little or nothing about their conscientious and exhausting work, and few are the authors who are prepared to recognize publicly the benefits they have derived from their friendly suggestions and criticisms. The number of manuscripts completely recast, or improved out of all knowledge, at a reader's suggestion is far greater than is commonly supposed. Usually his advice is accepted and acted upon, as was the case with one of the most successful first novels of this century, and that is the last one hears about his assistance. Occasionally, to recall a recent experience of my own, the author rejects with scorn a long list of suggested additions and amendments to his manuscript on the ground that not a comma needs altering, and then a few months later proceeds to publish the book elsewhere with every single suggestion incorporated, and, needless to say, without any acknowledgment. If authors were as prompt to recognize the services of publishers' readers as they are to criticize them, the public would learn with surprise how much it owes to a group of conscientious workers, of whose existence it is barely aware. I had occasion recently to show one of our reader's reports on a first novel to Mr. Compton Mackenzie; to his letter in reply, he added the following postscript:

I wish reviewers would write as good criticism as publishers' readers!

Encouragement of that kind does not come the way of the publisher's reader as often as it ought.

The number of reports on any given manuscript naturally depends upon its character. The very good and the very bad give little trouble, but there is so much that comes between: the competent, but uninspired; the manuscript that is brilliant in parts; the book that is too good to pass by, but not quite good enough to take. On all these the publisher is called upon to give his casting vote — and how often the publisher's reader thanks Heaven that the final decision rests with his employer and not with him!

The considerations which weigh with a publisher are manifold. If his business is a personal one, his list will, in the long run, reflect his own temperament and character. If there are many influences at work, the list will be like one of those composite photographs which are produced from time to time. But there are other factors; the tradition of the House, which influences the character of the manuscripts that are submitted; any sudden success, which will instantaneously give the publisher a reputation for books of the character of the successful one; the enthusiasm of travellers or senior members of the staff for any particular class of book; and, above all, chance, which may bring the most unlooked-for favours. Every publisher hopes that tomorrow will bring him a 'Jane Eyre' or some equally undisputed masterpiece.

CHAPTER II

'CASTING OFF' AND ESTIMATING

In most publishing offices, the next procedure is to negotiate with the author. That is probably due to the fact that in so many cases businesses are built up on the publication of novels; and with fiction issued at a uniform price and in a uniform style, rule-of-thumb methods can be followed without great risk. To me this has always seemed an instance of 'putting the cart before the horse,' because, until one has made out a fairly accurate estimate of the cost of production and publication, it is impossible to tell what margin there is to share with the author. In theory, it is, of course, possible to have any margin you want by increasing the published price; but, in practice, there are sharp limitations to any such increase. Frequently a book is worth publishing if it can be issued at not exceeding such and such a price, but most certainly destined to failure if issued at a higher price. It has always seemed to me necessary, therefore, and, in fact, a quite obvious procedure, to ascertain *at this point* exactly to what extent the publication is commercially worth while. This involves delay, but leaves one in the happy position of knowing the facts instead of guessing at them. Many propositions which appear very tempting before they are tested in this fashion, cease to be attractive thereafter. I could cite plenty of concrete examples, but perhaps it is sufficient to point out that many a good book cannot be published ex-

cept at a loss solely because of price limitations. This is even more often the case now than in pre-war days. For example, $1.75 is generally recognized as the top price at which any '12mo juvenile' can be expected to have a substantial sale. There are, of course, exceptions, but, generally speaking, it would be fatal, as some of us know to our cost, to publish a book intended for children at even such a slightly increased price as $2.00. This is typical of books in many categories. Very occasionally the reverse is true, and one can fix a higher price than is really essential without, in any way, impeding the sale, but this is much more rare now than it used to be. (Were it a more frequent occurrence, publishers would have greater justification for issuing books which show an insufficient margin.) In brief, there is often a 'right price' for a book, and in such cases publication at any other figure would spell failure.

Recognition of this fact often prompts publishers to meet it by the simple but unwise expedient of printing a larger first edition than the probable sales warrant. It must be borne in mind that the cost of composition remains the same whatever the number printed; therefore the larger the number printed, the smaller the share of the initial cost of composition to be borne by each individual copy. The production manager probably points out that if double the number were printed, or even if only an extra thousand were printed, there would be no difficulty about publishing at the desired price.

The production manager may well be correct; but to let the desire to publish at a given price determine the number to be printed, instead of the probable demand, is both a

snare and a delusion. The amateur publisher constantly makes this mistake and even the most wary publisher is occasionally led into it.

In the long run, the sounder policy is to base all estimates upon the probable number required, and to let the cost per copy control the published price regardless of other considerations.

This presupposes a definite and precise ratio between the cost per copy and the published price, and the strength of mind resolutely to pass by any publications where that ratio is unobtainable. Obvious as this method may sound, it is adopted by few, even in theory, and I know of only one publisher who systematically and consistently puts it into practice.

Preparing estimates. Clearly, whatever method be adopted, it is wise to ascertain the exact cost of production.

There are two methods of preparing estimates: the one which I believe is most usually adopted is for the calculations to be made in their entirety in the publisher's office. The more satisfactory plan, if the publisher is on sufficiently intimate terms with his printers to warrant it, is to pass the manuscript on to the printers for 'cast off.' 'Casting off' technically means calculating how many pages a given quantity of matter that has been set up in type will make; but the term is now generally used in a wider sense as covering an estimate of the number of pages a manuscript will make, if set in such and such a style. This is a very laborious task, if it is to be accurately done, and a 'cast off' that is not accurate may be very misleading. If the work is done in a publisher's office, it is seldom that

more is attempted than to provide approximate figures, a process that is very simply accomplished by counting the number of words in a few typical pages and multiplying the average by the total number of pages in the manuscript, and then basing the calculations upon a previous publication of the same length, etc. It is a rough-and-ready method which may suffice in some cases, but it contains pitfalls for the unwary. A 'cast off' on the lines of another volume may be all very well, if the other volume is by the same author and on a similar subject, but might otherwise be very wide of the mark. One man (say a novelist) writes in monosyllables, whilst another (say a psychoanalyst) uses so many long words that he fills five pages to the novelist's four, with a given number of words.

A printer notes factors of this kind, counts the manuscript word by word, inserts a little tick at the end of each hundred words and usually adds in pencil at the foot of each page the exact number of words on that particular page. Furthermore, he considers all the details which may influence the final result. He has, for instance, to allow for the blank spaces at the beginning and end of chapters, and such things as half-titles to sections, if the book is divided into sections. If any matter is quoted or intended to be set in small type, the printer adds the necessary marks to that effect, and modifies his calculations accordingly. Small type, footnotes, special accents, Greek, Hebrew, tabular matter, etc., are all 'extras,' which add materially to the expense.

The process of 'casting off' is by no means as easy as it may seem to the uninitiated. It is, indeed, highly skilled

work, and in most book-printing offices is entrusted to one specially competent man. It is his function to look out for any complication that may arise, and the thoroughness with which the work is done by a good firm is to be seen in the extensive list of queries which often accompanies the estimate.

The requirements of authors differ considerably. Some prepare their manuscripts so perfectly and with so much thought and pains, that they would be rightly annoyed if even a comma were altered. Others would be equally annoyed, and perhaps just as rightly so, if their manuscripts were literally followed, for ability to write does not always include ability to spell or to punctuate correctly.

Again, there are many points which are largely matters of taste, which should be settled before the printing is started, not after the whole book is in type. Some of the most serious troubles with authors arise from neglect of precautions of this kind, and it is always advisable to find out in advance whether the author wants his manuscript followed literally, or if he is willing to adopt what is known as the 'house style' of the printer. Every good printing house must, of necessity, have its standard on all points where variation is possible. Unless an author has prepared his manuscript very carefully and knows his way about very well (and comparatively few have a sufficient knowledge of the technique), he would be well advised to permit the printer's house style to be used throughout. The attempt, frequently made, to adopt some kind of compromise is seldom successful and is never to be recommended. Authors are apt to be unaware that their manuscripts may

be simultaneously set up by half a dozen compositors. It is quite easy to instruct them to follow 'copy,' or to follow the 'house style,' but it is difficult to get uniformity if variations are introduced. This must not be taken as excusing any discrepancies, because the printers' reader is responsible for consistency of style, punctuation, capitals, etc. None the less it will be found advisable in practice either to follow the house style or to prepare the manuscript with sufficient care and forethought to justify the instruction 'follow copy.'

If, as is probably the case, the printers were informed what the format of the book was to be when the manuscript was handed to them, they have now to consider what is the most suitable type and type area for the particular material. In many cases they will have been told the approximate number of pages it is desirable that the book should make; and if they do not already know the particular founts of type which the publishers favour, they may have received definite specifications when the manuscript was handed to them. With the much higher standard in these matters which is now set by all the best publishers, these points have to be most carefully thought out. The final appearance of the book is more influenced by the right selection of type, and the right proportions of the type area and 'leading,' than almost any other single factor. (To secure even and regular word-spacing the compositor needs to give a moment's thought at the termination of most lines to judge whether or not a further word can be got in or suitably broken.)

The whole question of quality of printing will be referred

to at greater length in the chapter on Production. Here it will suffice to emphasize that, except in the case of 'series,' where a prescribed style has to be followed, each book should be regarded as having an individuality of its own. A certain degree of standardization is inevitable, but the mechanical production of books will yield no better results than does the mechanical production of clothes, and it is as easy to detect whether the design of a book has been thought out as to decide whether a man's suit has been specially cut for him. The experienced publisher knows when to use the advantages of standardization and how and where the individual touches can be added without excessive cost.

Apart from the more obvious considerations, the standard of knowledge and taste of the assistants in the publisher's production department may have considerable influence upon the final appearance of a book, because in a large business it is not always possible for the publisher himself to settle every detail. But so long as books are erroneously regarded as 'dear,' financial considerations will be the biggest factor, and many desirable improvements in production will be sacrificed on the altar of cheapness.

Into the printers' methods of arriving at their estimates and the basis upon which their costs are ascertained we need not delve very deeply. Actually, printers' charges for composition are almost invariably based upon a standard of one thousand 'ens,' i.e., what it costs to set up one thousand of the letter 'n,' which is midway between the broadest and the narrowest letter of the alphabet. It is obvious that a page full of the letter 'm' could be set up more

quickly than a page full of the letter 'i,' because a compositor would have to handle three times as many of the letter 'i' to fill the same type space. The actual form in which the estimate reaches the publisher is usually somewhat as follows:

Specification: i.e., the approximate number of words: so many pages containing so many lines and so many 'ems'[1] wide: allowing *x* pages for an index, if any, as also for any illustrations which are to be included in the actual text of the book.

'*Printing* is usually as per scale, for most printers have a fixed rate which is recorded at the publisher's office, and, when once agreed, is applicable in all cases where exceptional circumstances do not arise.

Together with the estimate, the printers usually send an actual specimen page. Occasionally they merely preface their estimate with the remark, 'if set on the lines of such and such a book'; but, personally, I prefer to have a specimen set up from the manuscript itself, which can be submitted to the author for approval. In this specimen page the printers include, at our request, the title of the book, the approximate number of words, the approximate number of pages, their name, and the date on which the specimen was set up. This has many advantages in connection with the internal working of a publisher's office, and saves any possible confusion between the many such specimen pages which are constantly passing through a publisher's hands. Authors are sometimes unnecessarily alarmed at

[1] 'Pica' or '12-point' ems are the printers' standard of measurement: if set solid, six lines = one inch. In the United States, 'ems' rather than 'ens' are also the basis of the printers' charges. — F. G.

finding these particulars in the middle of some most cherished passage in their work and write expressing the hope that it is not our intention to include the offending lines in the final book. In point of fact, the inclusion of these specifications in the specimen page may even be an advantage to the author, because it defines at the outset the exact number of pages the book is intended to make, a point upon which authors are often hazy; and also gives the printers' estimate of the number of words, which, though calculated on a different basis, may serve to check the typist's charges. It seems to me a pity that this practice is not more generally adopted.

As soon as the printer's estimate and specimen page are received and have been checked, the estimate has to be completed by the addition of the cost of paper, binding, and other items. It is so very easy to omit some item, that most publishers have a printed form for their house estimates, of which that on page 22 is an example, though, of course, in greatly reduced size.

(1) and (2) *Composition, small type, etc., and make-up* are merely copied from the printer's figures.

(3) *Paper* needs more careful thought; curiously enough, the weight and bulk that are required affect the total cost even more than the price per pound. The price — except in war-time — is reasonably stable, but the weight and bulk vary greatly according to the nature of the book. It is also necessary to calculate the quantity of paper required, and to the uninitiated this presents a most puzzling problem. Even the expert occasionally makes the mistake (a very easy one to fall into) of halving or doubling the num-

ESTIMATE

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

for producing copies of '
to form volume of say sheets of 32 pages 8vo size,
approximate number of words thousand.

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
(1) Composition..... .... sheets @						
Small Type, Etc.....						
(2) Make-up or Re-imposing						
(3) Paper....Size....X....Weight...						
..... reams @						
(4) Printing..... " @						
(5) Half-Tone or Line Blocks.....						
(6) Paper for Illustrations.....						
Printing Illustrations.....						
(7) Moulding..... sheets @						
Stereotyping from Moulds						
(8) Binding..... copies @						
Paper Boards or Covers						
(9) Binder's Blocks.....						
(10) Jackets, including Paste-on (if any)						
(11) Corrections..... %						
(12) Artist's or Translator's Fees.....						
(13) Author's Royalty.....						
(14) Advertisements.....@ scale prices						
(15) Insurance.....@ per £100						
(16) Working Expenses.....						
Extras (if ordered by Author).....						
.....						
.....						
.....						
£						

Suggested Published Price.....

ber of reams required. But this and other like questions, which arise in the course of estimating, will be examined more closely in the chapter on Production.

(4) *Printing* is 'according to scale,' as previously mentioned, and it is, therefore, merely a question of knowing how many copies are to be printed, and filling in the figure accordingly. The number of reams usually corresponds to the paper ordered and is repeated from the previous entry on the estimate.

(5) *Blocks* depend, of course, upon whether the volume is to be illustrated either inside or out. Practically all novels have picture jackets — a most costly item, of which more later.

(6) *Paper for and the printing of the illustrations.* Art paper, used for the printing of most illustrations (though it is used far more often than it need be), is of a different texture, character, and weight, and has to be separately ordered. The printing of illustrations is calculated from a scale agreed upon with the printers. It is a higher rate than ordinary printing, owing to the greater care required and the additional time consequently occupied.

(7) *Moulds and stereoplates.* Whether these should or should not be included in the original estimate is an open question. The tendency in England is to debit them to the first reprint, if there is one. In America, on the other hand, electroplates (which are what they use) are almost invariably included in the original cost. Roughly speaking, the printer's charges are based upon the superficial area of the type of which moulds (papier-maché impressions of the standing type) or stereos (metal plates cast from the

moulds) are to be made.[1] For further information regarding these processes see the section on methods of reproduction in Chapter V.

(8) *Binding.* The cost, under present conditions, varies enormously according to the number to be bound at one and the same time. The binders have instituted what is known as a 'starting charge' to cover the warehousemen's time looking out the sheets, and the 'making ready,' which in some of the processes takes almost as long as the work itself — e.g., when once a case-making machine is running, the cost of an extra hundred cases is little beyond that of the materials involved. The scale would make the binding of small numbers almost prohibitive were it rightly adhered to; fortunately it is not. For estimating purposes it is necessary to strike an average — the first number to be bound may be substantial, whereas subsequent binding orders may be smaller. The price is usually per 100 or per 1000 copies, and there is a recognized scale of charges, which is generally accepted as a basis for comparison.

(9) *Binders' blocks.* It is usually impossible to get satisfactory results unless lettering is specially cut, at any rate for the shelf back of the binding. It is cut in brass at a cost of about 20 or 25 cents per letter, and can be made to fit the available space, which is rarely possible with type. Nothing disfigures a book more effectively than bad lettering on the binding, so that to begrudge this expense, as

[1] To be precise, plates are charged by back measurement, to include the bevel; moulds by type area plus one fourth inch all round to include clump.

many do, is false economy. (Brass blocks are also good for their hardness to stand up to heavy pressure on cloth and board under heat. The polished surface gives a good gloss on gold.)

(10) *Wrappers, jackets, or dustcovers*, as they are often called, have of late years come to be regarded as a necessity, and any estimate that omitted them would be incomplete. The cost may be anything from about $30 for say 1500 of the plainer variety to $200 for the same number of picture jackets in four colours, such as are frequently used for $2.00 novels. This latter figure includes the making of the blocks, but *not* the artist's fees.

(11) *Corrections*. Under this head will be included whatever free allowance it is the particular publisher's custom to make his authors. It may be a fixed sum: more often it is a percentage of the cost of composition.

(12) *Artist's fee for jackets*, or illustrations, is self-explanatory.

(13) and (14) *Author's royalty* and *advertising* are not, as a rule, included in a production estimate for the publisher's own use, but are dealt with separately. It is none the less desirable to have them on the printed form as a perpetual reminder.

(15) *Insurance* is usually covered by a floating policy, but individual cases arise where, because of the exceptional value of the manuscript or illustrations, special policies are called for.

(16) *Working expenses*, or 'overhead,' as they are often called, will be dealt with elsewhere in this book.

If the estimate has been carefully completed, we now

have a fairly accurate idea of the cost of producing a manuscript of which we have formed a favourable opinion.

(The wise publisher makes a point of subsequently checking these estimates with the *final* cost; it is a process from which much is to be learned.)

The next questions to decide are the published price at which the book is to be issued and the amount of the margin of profit available for division with the author. How these questions are answered will be considered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

THE PRICE OF BOOKS AND OVERPRODUCTION[1]

ANY one having the temerity to suggest that books are cheap would probably be met with a flat denial, or at best an incredulous smile. Yet a moment's careful study of the question would show that in proportion to the increase in the cost of the labour and materials involved there can be few commodities of which the price to the public shows such a slight rise.

As might be expected, it is the cheapest books that have suffered most, and the buyer who pays 50 cents instead of 25 cents for a volume of the Everyman Library is apt to overlook the fact that a pre-war $1.50 book is only $2.00 to-day and that the increase in more expensive volumes seldom exceeds 33⅓ per cent. But even this increase is partly illusory as far as most publishers are concerned, for, owing to the increased discounts demanded by the booksellers, the net amount received to-day by the publisher often does not greatly exceed the net amount received in 1914.

The price of books is a matter of such importance to the book-reading public that it ought to be more widely known what are the chief factors controlling prices.

Speaking broadly of the ordinary run of new books, of which a first edition of from 1000 to 2500 copies is printed — this excludes reprints, the big sellers, and educational

[1] A large part of this chapter appeared in the *Nation* and *Publishers' Circular*, and was separately printed in pamphlet form.

books — the published price can be divided into three more or less equal parts, viz.:

1. The actual cost of manufacturing, i.e., paper, printing, and binding.
2. The cost of distribution, i.e., booksellers' discounts and travellers' commissions.
3. The balance, which has to cover:
   (*a*) advertising;
   (*b*) the author's remuneration;
   (*c*) the publisher's working expenses;
   (*d*) the publisher's profit.

No two cases are alike, and the proportions will vary in special circumstances, e.g., where there is no author to pay, as in reprints of the classics; where there is a popular author commanding large royalties; or where there is less discount given to the trade, as with most educational books; but for general purposes the division will be found accurate enough. I propose to examine each separately.

1. Cost of Manufacture

Paper of the kind used in book production costs about one and two thirds what it did in 1914; e.g., a good quality antique wove, which could then be bought at about 2½*d.* per pound, would cost to-day round about 4*d.* — a not unreasonable increase and one comparing favourably with the fancy price of 1*s.* 7*d.* per pound which profiteers obtained in 1918.

Printing costs nearly three times what it did before the war. In fact, the complete production of a book in 1914 often amounted to less than the mere setting of the type does to-day. The difference is largely accounted for by

wage increases, but it is partly due to the printers' introduction of a costing system which showed them they were making insufficient allowance for 'overhead' and certain other items in their estimates.

Binding. It is difficult to give a fair comparison, because the increase in the cost of binding small numbers, from, say, 50 to 250, is much greater than it is in quantities of 1000 and upwards. Roughly speaking, for small quantities the cost is more than double, and for larger numbers about double the pre-war figure. That it is not more is probably due to improved machinery and the new plan of making a separate charge for warehousing stock, because the cost of the two principal items in binding, viz., 'labour' and 'cloth,' is about two and one half times what it was. Included under 'binding' is the 'jacket,' or 'dustcover,' which in the case of novels is a most serious item.

Averaging the three, the production costs of new books are more than double but less than treble what they were in 1914. The increase is highest when type-setting is the biggest factor and lowest when the number to be printed is large. In fact, it takes more than two shillings to do what one shilling did.

2. Cost of Distribution

When 'net' books were first introduced, booksellers were glad to secure 16⅔ per cent, with, perhaps, an extra 5 per cent on settlement of their account. The pendulum has now swung in the opposite direction, and to-day there are many who expect, and some who demand, a clear 33⅓ per cent *under all circumstances*, even on an order which

they have done nothing to obtain for a copy of a book they have never stocked.

The merits or demerits of their contention are discussed in Chapter VI, and the question is referred to here merely because it is a factor, and a decisive factor, in fixing the price.

If in the future the *minimum* discount is to be 33⅓[1] per cent, the average receipts of the publisher will be considerably reduced, because the wholesaler and exporter will want substantial additional discount beyond the *minimum* allowed to the retailer, i.e., in addition to the 33⅓ per cent; then the travellers' commission has also to be deducted. At present most publishers give a lower percentage on orders merely passed on by booksellers, and this keeps up the average net receipts; but if discounts are further increased, published prices will also and inevitably have to be increased. It is to this vital point that so many turn a blind eye. In brief, is the publisher to base his estimates on the assumption that his average gross receipts are going to be two thirds or only about half the published price? It makes just all the difference.

But booksellers are not the only channel of distribution the publisher has to consider, because certain books are issued for sale primarily to circulating libraries. Here we have other factors to consider:

1. A smaller number of copies will meet the demand, and the smaller the edition, the higher the price.

[1] In the United States a minimum discount to the trade of 40 per cent is as much desired by the booksellers and as difficult for the publisher as 33⅓ per cent in England. — F. G.

2. Within certain limits the circulating libraries are not influenced by the amount of the published price: they are much more concerned about the percentage of discount they obtain off that price.

How this works is best seen in a recent case from my own experience. A well-known Privy Councillor offered his reminiscences to a certain publisher, who at once expressed his readiness to publish them at 12*s.* 6*d.* The author protested that the price was too high, and as that publisher would not undertake to issue the book at less than 10*s.* 6*d.*, the manuscript was offered to my firm subject to the condition that we should publish at not exceeding 7*s.* 6*d.* It was a tight fit, but we agreed.

Most people would imagine that the circulating libraries would be pleased that a volume of reminiscences should be published at 7*s.* 6*d.*, instead of 12*s.* 6*d.*, and that they would congratulate the publisher upon giving such good value. But any such assumption would be mistaken. One library, on the contrary, which admitted that it would have circulated the book freely, had it been published at 12*s.* 6*d.* and supplied to them 'on subscription' at 8*s.* 4*d.* *less* 5 *per cent* (33⅓ per cent less 5 per cent), deliberately starved the book because it was offered to them at 5*s.* net (33⅓ per cent *without the extra* 5 *per cent*). In other words, the librarian thought more about the extra 5 per cent discount (= 5*d.*) than about the saving of 3*s.* per copy. It sounds unbelievable, but it is none the less true. What is more, that same librarian will be able at the end of the year to demonstrate the soundness of his buying. Does not his statistical analysis show that he ob-

tained a ratio of discount from the published price .00175 greater than his predecessor?

Needless to say, certain publishers have taken advantage of this fetich of 'terms,' and have put an artificially high price upon books intended chiefly for circulating libraries. It is then an easy matter for them to concede the 'special terms,' which will ensure substantial orders and 'free circulation.'

Such artificial prices affect only a tiny minority of books published, and their influence is fleeting, because any such book for which there is a substantial demand at the circulating libraries is invariably issued subsequently at a lower price for general sale.

Unfortunately, however, these 'circulating library books,' if they may be so called, can always be cited as evidence that books are dear. Further, amongst them are to be found many of the 'unwanted' — the unnecessary books of which complaint is often made; this is not surprising, because the book-borrower is not so discriminating as the book-buyer, and, as we shall see, often has to be content with whatever is given him.

3. Advertising: The Author and Publisher

(*a*) Few authors think their books have been sufficiently advertised, and yet it is a common thing for over $250 to be spent on a book whose sales do not reach one thousand. That means an expenditure of more than 25 cents per copy. Advertising rates have increased very considerably, and comparatively little can be accomplished with $250, unless the daily papers are excluded. The price of one inch single

column in the 'Daily Mail,' for instance, is now $40 for any special position, and it takes at least six inches, i.e., $240, to make any display. The present cost of advertising is certainly a factor which affects book prices.

(*b*) The author's remuneration nowadays is usually in the form of a royalty calculated on the published price. The royalty system has many advantages, but the plan of basing the royalty on the published price, though equitable enough theoretically, has the effect of necessitating a greater increase in the published price in certain circumstances than would otherwise be the case, e.g., if an extra 8 cents is spent on production it is necessary to add 25 cents (not 12 cents) to the published price, in order to cover not merely the additional expenditure and the booksellers' discount, but also the author's royalty upon this increased outlay. I am not contending that this should not be so (there is much to be said on both sides), but state it as a factor affecting book prices. It was certainly responsible for some very unreasonable increases during the war period. Because paper is eight times its normal price, ought the author to insist on eight times the normal royalty? On the other hand, if $1.00 is only worth 50 cents, and every one else is demanding increased remuneration, why not the author?

There is no need for me to refer to the 'ruinous policy' of paying too high royalties, because it has been dealt with so trenchantly in 'A Publisher's Confessions,' by the late Walter Hines Page, one of the many distinguished publishers America has sent to Europe as ambassadors. (Why is America the only country to use publishers in this

capacity?) It is obvious that the royalty, whatever it is, is payable out of the difference between the cost of production and the net proceeds received by the publisher. Short of skimping the production, a policy pursued by some, of restricting the booksellers' discount, as is done by others, there is no way of increasing the margin except by increasing the price.

(*c*) The publisher's working expenses are extraordinarily high. It is not that publishers' businesses are extravagantly run — most of them, I believe, are fairly economically run; but because at best the turnover is small compared with that of any staple commodity such as tea, and the detail work involved is out of all proportion.

I do not know of any book-publishing businesses whose working expenses are under 18 per cent — most are nearer, if not over, 25 per cent,[1] but I do not ask any reader to accept my statement. Let him refer to the case of *John Murray* v. *The Times*,[2] where the actual overhead costs were very closely investigated.

(*d*) The publisher's profit (if any) need not detain us, for it does not play as important a part in the fixing of prices as might be expected. This is not because the publisher is a philanthropist, but because his margin on subsequent editions is usually considerably larger, so that if reprints are called for as the result of his moderation, he will reap a greater reward than he could by any artificial enhancement of the published price of the first edition.

[1] In America the range is probably from 28 to 35 per cent, with 33⅓ per cent as a fair average. — F. G.

[2] May 5–8, 1908.

Apart from this fact, pressure is constantly being brought to bear upon the publisher from more directions than one to keep prices down, and, speaking generally, it is in his own interests (there are plenty of exceptions) to do so.

This completes the list of factors that influence the price of books other than the paramount one of the number to be printed.

It will, I think, be clear to any one who has read this statement carefully:

(1) That if a publication is to be economically self-supporting the published price must usually be fixed at *not less than* three times the cost of production (i.e. the cost of the paper, printing, and binding).
(2) Whereas if allowance had to be made for any increase in the item 'distribution,' the published price might well have to be as much as, if not more than, four times the manufacturing cost.[1]

Despite the foregoing — despite the undoubted facts that production expenses are double and that the costs of distribution and advertising have increased — there has so far been no proportionate addition to published prices. *Books are thus relatively cheaper than before the war.* The explanation is:

(1) That more books are being sold (it has been possible to print slightly larger editions).
(2) That publishers are working on a smaller margin (often insufficient to cover the inevitable proportion of losses).

[1] In the United States the higher overhead, greater advertising expenditure, and larger discount to the trade make it necessary that the published price should be *at least* five times the cost of production. — F. G.

(3) That, contrary to the usual impression, fewer books have been published.

This brings me to the question of

The Overproduction of Books

'Fewer and Better Books' is one of those American slogans that sound so well, but upon examination mean so little. If the phrase were 'Fewer and Better Novels,' which is what many people intend, there would be a good deal to be said for it, except that it is not usually the *best* novels which are most wanted by the public. 'Fewer duds and more best-sellers' is the interpretation that many in the book trade would give, but that, again, would lead us away from, rather than towards, the production of good literature.

What are the facts upon which this cry of overproduction rests? What vast increase in output is responsible for the outcry? The answer will surprise many who ought to know better. Fewer books were published during the five years ending December 31, 1923 (i.e., since the war ended), than during the five years ending December 31, 1913. The statistics are readily available in the columns of the 'Publishers' Circular' for those who like figures, and I do not propose to quote them. The fact remains that even in 1923 — a prolific year — fewer new books were issued than in 1913. And this is the more remarkable on closer investigation, because the 1923 figures were swollen by the books on the many new subjects that have arisen or come to the front since 1913.[1] There is the vast literature on both wire-

[1] The number of *new* books issued in 1924 was less and the number

less and relativity, to mention but two such topics. The very diversity of the subjects in which people are interested helps to create the problem and represents an important factor which those who call for fewer books are apt to overlook. Many of us have never succeeded in reading a book on relativity from cover to cover; more have never attempted the feat; but is that any reason why those who want books on relativity, or any subject under the sun, should not have them?

Is it not well that any one who feels he has a contribution to make to the common stock of knowledge should be as free as possible to make it? — that new ideas should be given full consideration? In a tree, is it not a sign of vitality that it sends out endless shoots that ultimately achieve no apparent purpose?

Unwanted books. All this brings me to the really unwanted books. Some, as we have seen, are produced for the circulating libraries, but most are published at the author's expense, or 'on commission,' as it is generally called, and this accounts for the usual condemnation, as a class, of all books published on commission. Certain old-fashioned publishers even boast that they *never* publish anything on commission, probably forgetting that some of the most distinguished authors take the very sensible line that they do not require any publisher to finance them, and prefer to pay the publisher for whatever services they

in 1925 slightly more than in 1913. Even so the figure remains at about half the German total and less than the combined totals of France and Czecho-Slovakia.

do desire him to render, and to retain the entire profit for themselves. Many famous and most successful books have been published on commission — rumour has it that Keynes's 'Economic Consequences of the Peace' was published under these conditions. Two of the best-sellers in my predecessors' list — books that have been selling merrily for years — were, until quite recently, commission publications. If, on the other hand, we attempt to confine our condemnation to commission books for which there is no demand, I am reminded of Mr. Edward Carpenter's description of his experience with 'Towards Democracy.' I quote his own words: [1]

> I have spoken elsewhere about the considerable period of gestation and suffering which preceded the birth of this book; nor were its troubles over when it made its first appearance in the world. The first edition, printed and published by John Heywood of Manchester, at my own expense, fell quite flat. The infant showed hardly any signs of life. The Press ignored the book or jeered at it. I can only find one notice by a London paper of the first year of its publication, and that is by the old sixpenny 'Graphic' (of August 11, 1883), saying — not without a sort of pleasant humour — that the phrases are 'suggestive of a lunatic Ollendorf, with stage directions,' and ending up with the admission that 'the book is truly mystic, wonderful — like nothing so much as a nightmare after too earnest a study of the Koran!'

If we limit ourselves yet further, and say that under no circumstances ought unwanted novels to be published at the author's expense, I am bound to point out that the first

[1] *My Days and Dreams*, by Edward Carpenter. (George Allen & Unwin Ltd.)

effort of one of our greatest living writers of fiction was published under those conditions (it was under a pseudonym.) Probably it would never have found a publisher under any other conditions, for it was very immature work, had no sales, and has never been reissued. But had it not been published, would that now distinguished writer have been encouraged to take up authorship as a profession?

Anyhow, I think it is clear that we must not be too hasty in condemning even unsuccessful commission publications, if it is the interests of literature we have at heart. Furthermore, we must not overlook the many learned works of research which would never be made available for future students if they had to wait for a publisher willing to finance their publication on their commercial merits.

We are left with the publications which have no intrinsic merit, which show no promise, and for which there is no demand. Despite the very great pressure that is often brought to bear, such books do not (with very rare exceptions) appear under the imprint of any of the more reputable publishers. They certainly are a burden to the overworked literary editor who has the task of weeding them out, but a mere glance at the publisher's imprint will usually tell him all he needs to know. They do not occupy much of the bookseller's time or space, because he never subscribes to them, but merely procures them when they are definitely ordered. Usually only a small proportion of the edition is bound up, and, apart from the review copies, and perhaps forty or fifty sold to friends and relatives of the author, very few copies get into circulation. After the

lapse of a year or two, the unbound copies are pulped, or, more probably, used for packing up other publications. It is doubtful, therefore, whether the few hundred books of this kind which are published yearly really present any great problem, or even a problem at all, to any one except literary editors and a few booksellers. As a method of spending money it does not seem to me to be any better or worse than many others about which no one is unduly troubled. And the fact remains that, whatever provisions were made to suppress this class of book, there would always be with us a few hundred people under the erroneous impression that their literary efforts were masterpieces which must be printed regardless of the consequences or cost. Often they are under the delusion that it is merely due to a secret conspiracy on the part of publishers that their manuscripts are returned to them.

There is, however, a form of overproduction which is seldom mentioned, but which is in some respects much more serious in its consequences. If an edition of three thousand copies represents the demand there is for some book, there is obviously no point in printing thirty thousand, even though the thirty thousand copies could each be produced infinitely more cheaply than would be possible were one tenth that number printed. I have in mind one particular firm now out of business which recently ran through £30,000 largely as the result of overproduction of that kind. The bookselling trade would have been swamped had the whole of their surplus stock been flung upon the market. A large proportion of it had to be pulped, not because it did not consist of excellent books — they were some

of them first-rate and most beautifully produced — but because the supply was altogether in excess of what the market could absorb.

Insufficient sales. But although I am bound to admit that there are far too many worthless books published, the *real* problem is not overproduction, but underconsumption, or, to be more precise, insufficient sales. Most people have not yet learned to regard books as a necessity. They will beg them, they will borrow them, they will do everything, in fact, but buy them. People who would be ashamed to cadge for anything else they wanted, who will unhesitatingly pay $2.00 apiece for a dozen gramophone records, or $5.00 each for stalls at a theatre, will think twice, if not three times, before spending even $1.50 upon a book which will last a lifetime. The fact that we in England do not spend on books — per head of population — anything approaching the amount spent by the population of New Zealand, and that, relatively speaking, we have not nearly so many booksellers' shops, demonstrates that, despite the increase in demand since the war, there is still ample room for expansion. Book-lovers would do well to ignore what is often idle chatter about overproduction, and to concentrate attention upon encouraging the new reading public which is growing up around us.[1] For the fact that more and better books are not read, we are all in a measure responsible. It is not the unwanted books that bar the way. It is the lack of early training and the lack of guidance. It is often a lack of knowledge or an absence of realization of the

[1] See Mr. Sidney Dark's pamphlet, *The New Reading Public.* (George Allen & Unwin Ltd.)

joys of reading and the inexhaustible treasures of English Literature.

It was the recognition of this aspect of the matter which led American publishers to take collective action, and prompted 'The Society of Bookmen' to urge upon the various associations connected with the book trade in Great Britain the formation of 'The National Book Council,' whose work is considered in the chapter on Publicity.

But this is a digression from our theme. We have now seen how the probable published price is determined and can pass on to the negotiations with the author which, as explained, often precede all the careful estimating, etc., outlined in Chapter II.

CHAPTER IV

AGREEMENTS

In every number of the 'Author,' under the ominous heading 'Warnings to the Producers of Books,' are printed a few standing rules to be observed in an agreement. I cannot do better than reprint them *verbatim:*

There are four methods of dealing with literary property:

I. Selling it Outright

This is sometimes satisfactory, *if a proper price can be obtained.* But the transaction should be managed by a competent agent, or with the advice of the Secretary of the Society.

II. A Profit-Sharing Agreement (a bad form of agreement)

In this case the following rules should be attended to:

(1) Not to sign any agreement in which the cost of production forms a part without the strictest investigation.
(2) Not to give the publisher the power of putting the profits into his own pocket by charging for advertisements in his own organs, or by charging exchange advertisements. Therefore keep control of the advertisements.
(3) Not to allow a special charge for 'office expenses,' unless the same allowance is made to the author.
(4) Not to give up American, Colonial, or Continental rights.
(5) Not to give up serial or translation rights.
(6) Not to bind yourself for future work to any publisher. As well bind yourself for the future to any one solicitor or doctor!

III. The Royalty System

This is perhaps, with certain limitations, the best form of agreement. It is above all things necessary to know what the

proposed royalty means to both sides. It is now possible for an author to ascertain approximately the truth. From time to time very important figures connected with royalties are published in the 'Author.'

IV. A Commission Agreement

The main points are:

(1) Be careful to obtain a fair cost of production.
(2) Keep control of the advertisements.
(3) Keep control of the sale price of the book.

General

All other forms of agreement are combinations of the four above mentioned.

Such combinations are generally disastrous to the author.

Never sign any agreement without competent advice from the Secretary of the Society.

Stamp all agreements with the Inland Revenue stamp.

Avoid agreements by letter if possible.

The main points which the Society has always demanded from the outset are:

(1) That both sides shall know what an agreement means.
(2) The inspection of those account books which belong to the author. We are advised that this is a right, in the nature of a common law right, which cannot be denied or withheld.
(3) Always avoid a transfer of copyright.

With much, but by no means all, of the foregoing it is easy to agree.

Let us start at the beginning. Is a formal agreement desirable? Is not a verbal understanding sufficient — confirmed, if need be, by an exchange of letters? I do not think that any one who has had considerable experience of publishing would have any hesitation about answering that

question. A formal agreement is not only desirable, it is *essential*, and for more reasons than one. In the first place, if the agreement is properly drawn up, it defines in the most concise form possible the nature of the arrangement. It is thus the best and most practical form of record for the guidance of the many people concerned in carrying out the understanding between author and publisher. If no such record existed in the form of an agreement, it would have to be created for the efficient administration of the publisher's own business. I speak with no little feeling, because amongst the businesses with which I have at one time or another been associated was one where formal agreements were the exceptions rather than the rule, and even when formal agreements were signed, they were so 'simple' as to tell you nothing. The proprietor of the business said he never had any trouble, his authors always trusted him, which, indeed, they had every reason to do, for he was an exceptionally honourable man, who paid his firm's creditor's twenty shillings in the pound when he was under no legal liability to pay them one penny. But he never paused to think what would happen when the author's executors and his own successors were confronted with one another, neither having the dimmest notion of their respective rights or obligations! A few score tangles of that kind to unravel would convince any one of the necessity of a formal agreement. But there are other reasons. It is essential that both parties should know precisely what rights are being conveyed. There is no more fruitful source of trouble than vagueness on such points, and yet agreements by letter almost invariably leave them undecided. It is very

easy to say, 'We will deal with this or that question when it arises,' but quite another thing to do so when the time arrives. A formal agreement compels both parties to face the issues at the outset; if they cannot agree then, the probability is they will never do so.

That authors should understand the arrangements into which they are entering is of the utmost importance, and nowadays, with the Authors' Society behind them, they have no excuse for not knowing all there is to know; but there is one point that is apt to be overlooked, viz., that an unfavourable agreement with an honourable firm is at all times to be preferred to an impeccable agreement with an unscrupulous one. An agreement which is ideal from the point of view of one of the parties is likely to be unsatisfactory to the other party. A publisher who habitually enters into agreements with which no theoretical objection could be found, from the author's point of view, either has no real intention of carrying out the agreements or, granted he has the best intentions, will inevitably find himself in the long run — failing some endowment or inexhaustible resources — unable to do so. I shall have occasion to refer to this subject later.

Turning to the second of the main points which the Authors' Society has always demanded, viz., 'The inspection of those account books which belong to the author,' I can but express my wholehearted agreement, and deplore the fact that the 'right' is not more frequently exercised. Nothing would promote a greater feeling of confidence than an authoritative statement from time to time that such and such a publisher's accounts had been examined

and found not only correct, but very well kept.[1] If there is any doubt about the right, provision should be made for it in every agreement. But may I suggest one qualification? The person exercising the right should possess an elementary knowledge of book-keeping. It does not seem to me to be part of a publisher's obligations to teach authors the elements of book-keeping, though I have spent many hours in the process. Authors cannot be expected to bother personally about such things. I merely suggest that if accounts are a mystery to them, they should delegate the task of investigation to some one accustomed to figures. The object of the Authors' Society in running an accounts department is presumably to save authors trouble and responsibility of this kind.

For some reason I have never been able to fathom, many authors have an instinctive feeling that publishers are immune from the laws of arithmetic; that, whilst with any one else 'Expenditure $5000, Gross Receipts $4000' means a loss of at any rate $1000, with publishers this is supposed to mean a thumping big profit. Probably this is due to a very natural disinclination on the part of authors to admit even the possibility of any kind of shortcoming in their offspring. It is just this fact of the unique relationship between the author and his book which makes publishing so different from any purely commercial pursuit, and at once more interesting and more difficult.

The third main point, 'Always avoid a transfer of copy-

[1] Many American and a few British publishers issue their royalty statements formally certified by a chartered accountant; but if the statement does not include a stock account, such a certificate might in some cases have little value.

right,' arises in connection with all the four main types of agreement. The recommendation would be more readily understood were the word 'always' omitted, because in this world, at any rate, you cannot eat your cake and have it.

Outright Sale

The first method of dealing with literary property cited in the 'Author' is 'selling it outright,' which is described as 'sometimes satisfactory, if,' etc. But you either sell your literary property outright or you do not. If you do — and I may add it is seldom satisfactory to the publisher — there is *ipso facto* a transfer of copyright.

I have said it is seldom satisfactory to the publisher, and for this reason, that in most cases there is no way of gauging the 'proper price.' To buy outright is, in fact, a pure gamble; and publishing is itself a sufficient gamble, without adding unnecessarily to the risk. Furthermore, in my experience, it is inclined to be a case of 'Heads I win, tails you lose,' because if fortune does happen to favour the publisher, he is almost certain to be expected (if not to be actually called upon) to share the winnings with the loser.

But there are points in favour of an outright purchase. No other method gives a publisher such a free hand to make any and every use of literary material and to exploit every possibility of finding markets for it. No other plan gives a publisher so much inducement to advertise. In fact, it is quite conceivable that an author would gain, on balance, as much as he would lose by the outright sale of say one or possibly two of his earlier works, if the deal were made with

a really enterprising firm of good standing. His reward would come with the publication of his subsequent books, for which a market would have been established.

A Profit-Sharing Agreement

The second method cited is described as 'a bad form of agreement.' This statement seems to me altogether too sweeping. It is a method which has been much abused by publishers in the past, and has therefore, and naturally, fallen into disrepute. In so far as it lends itself more readily to abuse than the royalty system, it is a bad form of agreement; but, honourably carried out, there is much to be said in its favour *for some classes of publications*. It gives the publisher more work in connection with the rendering of accounts, and the author a great deal more information about costs of production, etc., than any other method. In fact, if the accounts are made out in the detailed form in which I consider the author is entitled to have them presented, they are so instructive to a young author that he misses much if he never has a book published under this system.

Theoretically, at any rate, the basis is equitable, because there are no profits until the actual costs of production and advertising are covered, and the only question thereafter is the proportion in which the profits are to be divided. It is, in effect, a partnership in which the interests of both parties are identical; but the author has to face the disadvantages as well as the advantages of being in partnership with his publisher. (I am assuming that the agreement is being honourably carried out. I will refer to possible abuses

in a moment.) One of the greatest drawbacks seems to me the unevenness of the flow of the profits. This is best illustrated by an actual example. Under the royalty system, in the case of a book selling steadily at the rate of 500 per annum, of which 2000 copies were printed at a time, the author's income would be constant. Under a half-profits agreement the first year would show no profit, all the proceeds of the sales being absorbed by the cost of printing 2000 and binding (say) 1000. Towards the end of the second year, it would be necessary to bind up the second thousand copies, and this would eat into the available profits. The third and fourth years, however, would show bumper profits, and both author and publisher would have their reward. But, in the meantime, the author has to live, and the fact that in the long run this method might yield him more would be poor consolation, if he had no other resources.

For this reason, a profit-sharing agreement is not generally applicable, but there are many cases where it is the ideal arrangement for both parties. There are, for instance, many learned works, written without any thought of direct pecuniary reward, whose publication may bring great indirect return to their authors in the form of academic distinctions or appointments. Books of this character seldom do more than pay their way, and they often take years to do that, but they bring *kudos* to both author and publisher. They are usually expensive to produce, and in such cases the author is likely to derive benefit from publication long before there are any profits to divide. In one instance I recall, the author had retired from the lectureship his book

brought him before the book had paid its way. It was published by the predecessors of our predecessors in the early nineties; some five or six years ago it turned the corner, and it now yields author and publisher a steady profit.

At this point it seems apposite to mention that all the criticisms of agreements I have ever read assume that the printed forms were intended to apply to novels. In fact, all discussions on matters connected with the book trade seem, consciously or unconsciously, to be based on the assumption that novels are the only books published, or, at any rate, the only ones that need be taken into account. How great a fallacy this is, a glance at the statistics of new books published will show. It is true that fiction heads the list as the biggest individual class, but novels represent only about one seventh or one-eighth of the total new books. Criticism that may be fair, when applied to an agreement for a novel, may be grossly unfair, when applied to some other kind of book. A profit-sharing agreement may thus be an unfavorable form of agreement for an unsuccessful novel, but a suitable one for a work on philosophy.

Abuses. We will now turn to the abuses to which reference has been made. They are referred to in the first three rules laid down by the Authors' Society, quoted at the beginning of the chapter. The first does not seem to be very happily worded, in that it is not made clear to the author precisely wherein the danger lurks. It is that the charges for production may be excessive. The agreement should provide that the charges for printing, paper, binding, etc., should be as per printer's, stationer's, and binder's invoices, and should represent the publisher's actual out-

of-the-pocket expenditure. If the publisher is his own printer or binder, an assurance should be obtained that the rates shall be his regular rates.

Abuse No. 2 concerns advertising, and relates more to the past, when most book publishers issued one or more magazines or periodicals, than to the present, when comparatively few do so. None the less, the advice is sound.

Abuse No. 3, a charge for 'office expenses,' is of a much more controversial character, and there is a great deal to be said on both sides. Many of my fellow publishers will not agree with me, but (speaking generally) I think the Authors' Society's contention that this expenditure should not be included is just. If that be admitted, however, certain definite out-of-pocket expenses such as travellers' commission, which have hitherto been covered by the ambiguous phrase 'office expenses,' would have to be separately charged. A commission paid to a traveller for securing an order for a specific book is as much an out-of-pocket expense as a printer's bill, and is a different matter from a traveller's salary, which would, in any case, have to be met along with rents, rates, and taxes, were the particular book published or not. In brief, we can adopt the income-tax officials' phrase, 'expenses wholly, solely, and necessarily incurred,' which automatically excludes any general charge.[1]

Turning to the other side of the account, to which the 'Author' makes no reference, it is important to see that the

[1] This plan, too, presents difficulties in definition and accounting. A small percentage charge *agreed upon in advance*, to cover actual editorial and selling expense, can be made fair to both parties and is easy to handle in accounting. — F. G.

agreement provides for full credit to be given for the proceeds of the sales. It is merely a question of determining a fair average, because the trade terms fluctuate according to the quantity ordered and the time of ordering, viz., before or after publication, and it would be an almost impossible task to treat each individual sale separately.

So much for the possible abuses. They will not arise with a really good firm; and, unless the publisher's honesty is above suspicion, I agree that it is wisest for authors to avoid a profit-sharing arrangement, useful and equitable as it often is.

To rules 4–6 I must take exception, unless they are rules intended to be broken. According to rule 4 the author is not to give up American, colonial, and continental rights. Let us deal with them individually.

(*a*) *America.* The advice is no doubt theoretically excellent, particularly if applied to works of fiction, but of ordinary publications not five per cent are separately printed and copyrighted in the U.S.A. What about the other ninety-five per cent? Under a profit-sharing agreement it often pays the author handsomely to allow his publisher to sell an edition to the United States. Is he wise to take the advice of the Authors' Society and debar his publisher from making a bargain profitable to both parties? In the case of one book in our list, issued under a profit-sharing agreement, the American publishers, who have imported thousands of copies, have clamoured for the right to reprint the book in America. I referred the decision to the author and left him free to do as he pleased. He went into the matter most closely, and found that even if he secured a

12½ per cent royalty, which represents the maximum he could expect in view of the lapse of the American copyright, he would not be so well off as under the *status quo*. I was accordingly instructed to remind the American publishers that they had refused to print the book at the outset, when it would have benefited the author by securing his copyright, and that now he found it more profitable to leave matters as they stood. Would it be any good telling *that* author never to part with his American rights.

Every English publisher worth his salt tries to ensure American copyright for his authors' books by securing an offer from an American publisher to print their work in the States; if he fails, he sells sheets, which is usually less profitable to the author, though sometimes more, as in the instance cited above. Are agreements to be drafted with the five per cent or the ninety-five per cent of cases in the foreground? The Authors' Society has the five per cent firmly in mind, the publisher the ninety-five per cent. Therein lies the difference.

Novels are seldom sold in sheets, and if the reservation of the American rights were confined to them and to such books as really called for separate printing in the States, the advice would be more practical, though not necessarily sound.[1]

(*b*) *Colonial rights*. What the author is to achieve by keeping these is a mystery I cannot pretend to explain. Not a quarter of one per cent of new books by English authors are separately printed in any British dominion, so

[1] All this, *mutatis mutandis*, is sound doctrine for the American author considering the disposition of his British rights. — F. G.

that there would not seem to be even a theoretical advantage in reserving these rights. If, on the other hand, they are included with the British rights, there is every probability of a substantial proportion of every edition printed being sold by the British publisher in the dominions overseas — surely a consummation devoutly to be wished.

(*c*) *Continental rights.* This refers primarily to the Tauchnitz editions, but would include any competitors of Tauchnitz who may from time to time arise or who are already in existence. The output of the Tauchnitz collection is at most sixty volumes per year, about ninety per cent of which are fiction. For the most part only established authors are included. It would be simple, as I have frequently pointed out, for an author to reserve the right to have his work included in the Tauchnitz or any similar collection issued for circulation on the Continent without thereby depriving the British publisher of the right to sell his edition everywhere in Europe, if he can do so, because the more expensive British editions do not compete with the cheap paper-bound Tauchnitz editions. But despite this alternative (which is quite satisfactory to Tauchnitz), and for the sake of a merely theoretical 60 to 12,000[1] chance, the Authors' Society still continues to recommend authors to exclude from their contracts with British publishers the right to sell their books on the continent of Europe.

In an issue of the 'Author' in which the recommendation appears, the editor, with quite unconscious humour, com-

[1] Twelve thousand equals the approximate number of new books published yearly in Great Britain.

plains that British publishers show lack of enterprise in failing to take greater advantage of the Scandinavian market. To withhold from a publisher the right to sell a book on the Continent and then to abuse him for not doing it, would seem to be a little inconsistent. But somehow few besides myself seem to think it strange, and I find, in practice, that publishers are expected to agree not to sell on the Continent, but none the less to do so!

This proceeding is not a little disconcerting to any one trained to judge a business man's integrity by his readiness to carry out an agreement to his own hurt. In any case, there is no point in the continuance of the practice, and it is high time that the references in agreements to the continental market should conform with the intentions of the parties, and not say one thing and in practice mean the opposite.

Rule 5. 'Not to give up serial or translation rights' needs qualification. Theoretically, the advice may be sound, but what, presumably, concerns the author most is that those rights should be exploited to his greatest advantage. If and when that end can best be achieved by his reserving the rights (which it often can, in the case of successful authors) there is no more to be said, but there are many cases where the reverse is true. A publisher may be in a position to create or secure an opening for the serial rights, in which case is the author to persist in reserving them? Is his talent to be wrapped in a napkin? The reservation of translation rights often has that effect. I am aware that many publishers do not trouble themselves in the least about translations. That the author is wise to reserve the rights in

such cases is self-evident, but there are other firms which not only place an exceptionally large proportion of translation rights, but actually create the openings by personal visits and recommendations to foreign publishers.

To give just one example among many — a leading German publisher, whom I frequently visit, has at my suggestion embarked, as an experiment, upon the publication of German translations of English works on Philosophy. He left the original selection largely to us, and has signed agreements for six publications from our list. He has not, I believe, acquired any other translation rights from English authors, and there is not the slightest likelihood that more than one at most of those six books would have been issued in German, had the authors reserved the rights. Would they have been well advised to do so?

If the author is in a position to do better for himself, by all means let him reserve the rights; but to do so merely for the sake of doing so is quite another thing. Let him first make sure whether the publisher with whom he is negotiating has or has not special facilities for dealing with them.

This is another of the many questions which seem to be judged almost exclusively from the point of view of fiction (and a best-seller at that!), where the sum involved may be considerable. In the case of translations of works of scientific and philosophic interest, the market is of necessity much more restricted, the amounts at issue are often inconsiderable, and, from a purely commercial point of view, no commission (not even the entire proceeds!) would make it worth while to devote the time to this side of their work which some publishers do.

But are there never to be any other than commercial considerations?

Is it or is it not desirable that there should be a wider dissemination in foreign countries of English ideas and learning? The authors I have had the privilege to represent have, without exception, though in varying degrees, stressed the importance of having their work available in other languages far above the pecuniary return. Personally, I feel that to assist in the interchange of ideas between the peoples of different nations is one of the most useful services that can be rendered. So strongly do I feel this, that the decisive question to me is who can be the most certain of placing the rights, not who ought theoretically to control them. The steps it is necessary to take to ensure competent translations, etc., are discussed in Chapter IX.

Rule 6. 'Not to bind yourself for future work to any publisher' is a subject of perennial controversy. The analogy, given in the 'Author,' that you might as well bind yourself in the future to any one solicitor or doctor might be appropriate, if solicitors and doctors were allowed to devote their energy to stealing one another's clients or patients.

In the publishing trade the frequency of attempts to reap where others have sown has in some cases necessitated the securing of an option on the author's next work. No man would be expected to till virgin soil if he had no certainty of reaping more than the first crop. To suggest that he ought thereafter to be satisfied to bid in open competition with those who had done nothing to prepare the soil would be palpably unjust.

That these options are frequently abused is common knowledge; but that they are often necessary must, likewise, be admitted. The question to be decided is the kind of option that is fair, and that question has to be answered in relation to the circumstances and, in particular, the risks which the publisher is running. The author of a first novel could reasonably be expected to bind himself to the extent of two further novels, but the suggestion that he should bind himself to the extent of five or six seems to me indefensible. Properly worded, an option need by no means prove onerous. If the publisher intends spending a great deal of money on advertising a first novel and on establishing the author's reputation, the terms the author would receive for the second book would obviously have to be rather less favourable than those a publisher who had not spent that money could offer, because capital outlay of that kind has to be spread over two or three books to justify the expenditure and prove remunerative. In practice, it is not the first and perhaps most popular book by an author which pays the publisher best, but the second or third, in the publication of which he is reaping the benefit of his earlier work and expenditure. Certain publishing houses are so well aware of this fact that they will resort to almost any expedient to entice away from his original publisher a novelist whose work has been, or is being, specially boomed.

In some circles this blatant exhibition of the predatory instinct is considered 'enterprising,' and was, and perhaps still is, greatly encouraged by certain (not all) literary agents. But it is becoming recognized that this kind of

enterprise, though possibly advantageous to a few agents, is not in the long run beneficial to the author, the publisher, or the book trade. (That as a method it should have appealed to certain literary agents is not surprising, because it affords one of the simplest ways of opening up relations with young and successful authors.)

What is important is that the option clause should be properly worded. In many cases all that will be called for will be a simple provision that 'the publishers shall have the first offer of the author's next literary work suitable for publication in book form.' Such a clause binds the author to very little, but it does ensure to the publisher the chance of seeing the next book, and makes things just a little more difficult for the predatory publishers. The author is still free to change his publisher, if there is any real reason for doing so.

In the case of a first novel, the risks run by the publisher are disproportionately high, and the clause is likely to be more stringently worded. It will probably state the exact terms and conditions upon which the next novel is to be published (if accepted) and possibly the next two novels. Frequently, when the option covers two novels, the terms for the first are defined and the terms for the second are left open for subsequent discussion and mutual agreement.

If, under the terms of the original agreement, the royalty is on a sliding scale, the option may provide for the royalty on the new book starting at the point which the previous book had reached. This is, of course, a most advantageous arrangement for the author, and, as a customary practice, is a comparatively recent innovation. In

cases where a publisher has an option on an author's next two (or more) books, it has been debated whether refusal of the first book offered under the option clause should release the author from any further obligations, or whether he is still bound to offer further books up to the number specified in the option clause. The fair solution, in my view, is that the option should lapse and that the author should be unfettered in his efforts to place the 'refused book' elsewhere; but that should he fail to get it published within (say) a year of its refusal, the original option should remain in force.

The Royalty System

The third method of dealing with literary property is the one most frequently adopted. We can safely agree that 'with certain limitations it is the best form of agreement' for common use. What limitations the Authors' Society has in mind are not stated, but one was mentioned in the chapter on 'The Price of Books.' In that same chapter, information will be found concerning the best way of ascertaining what royalties are, and are not, practicable. Because it is possible to pay this or that royalty in one case, it by no means follows that it is possible (or expedient) to do so in another. It might be a sound method of reasoning were novels of 80,000 words in length, issued at $2.00, the only books to be considered; but, as I have pointed out before, novels represent at most but one seventh of the new books published. Furthermore, a publisher accepting a first novel containing 160,000 words has not the same margin (if he has any margin at all!) as he

would have were the length 80,000. Although this is quite obvious, it is a point almost consistently overlooked by authors.

If the question is examined at all, it is from the point of view of the established novelist. When you are going to print over 15,000 copies, it does not affect the cost by much more than two cents per copy whether the composition amounts to $400 or $800, but if the first edition consists of 1500, the difference is 25 cents per copy. Perhaps I may be permitted to take this opportunity to emphasize that the increases in costs of production discussed in detail in Chapter III all tend to make it harder for the writer at the bottom of the ladder and, by comparison, easier for the writer who has arrived at the top.

To return to the amount of the royalty, we have already seen that in a self-supporting publication the only source whence the royalty can come is the margin between the costs of production and the amount received by the publisher from the book trade. Many authors fail to grasp this obvious and elementary fact, and give themselves and others much unnecessary tribulation through their failure to do so. It sounds very nice to say, 'Here is my manuscript; it must be published at $1.50 and I must have a fifteen per cent royalty'; but, if the book is going to cost with plates ninety cents per copy to produce, and the receipts will not amount to more than ninety cents per copy, the author is crying for the moon; and however 'enterprising' the publisher, the fact remains that he cannot provide it. As matters stand, there is far too much guesswork in fixing the amount of the royalty. There are times

when it is inevitable that chance should enter in; but in most cases it is possible to calculate in advance exactly what margin any particular undertaking will show. If the margin is insufficient, and the cost of production cannot be reduced, the question of increasing the price has to be considered. Will such an increase kill or curtail the sale? In many cases a publisher is bound to advise that it will; in others, that it will not have any serious effect. These situations arise more constantly now than they did, owing to the increase in production costs being out of all proportion to the increase in published prices. Many books are too cheap, and leave no adequate margin for author and publisher, though this fact is seldom realized, even by authors whose interests may thereby be prejudiced.

The impression that there are unsuspected margins out of which higher and yet higher royalties can be paid is so widespread that, in advocating the substitution of careful calculation for guesswork in arriving at the amount of the royalty, I should like to place on record that, whatever the position may have been in the past, publishers to-day have nothing to lose and everything to gain by courting inquiry into facts and figures; the present tendency is to attempt to work with an insufficient margin, a policy which, in the long run, can only prove disastrous. It is my opinion that an impartial investigation would result to-day in the scaling down of royalties on the first 2000 copies sold in many more cases than it would increase them.

At this point it would be most desirable to reprint in full the opening chapter of 'A Publisher's Confessions,' by the late Walter Hines Page, the famous ambassador-pub-

lisher. He dealt with the whole question of royalties much more succinctly than I could, but, as the book has recently been reissued at a popular price by Messrs. Wm. Heinemann, Ltd., I cannot do better than refer my readers to it. In the meantime, I will give one brief quotation:

> The rise of royalties paid to popular authors is the most important recent fact in the publishing world. It has not been many years since ten per cent was the almost universal rule; and a ten per cent royalty on a book that sells only reasonably well is a fair bargain between publisher and author. If the publisher do his work well — make the book well, advertise it well, keep a well-ordered and well-managed and energetic house — this division of the profits is a fair division — except in the case of a book that has a phenomenally large sale. Then he can afford to pay more. Unless a book has a pretty good sale, it will not leave a profit after paying more than a ten per cent royalty.

He is, of course, referring to American conditions, and in America a publisher's working expenses are greater than in England, but that is met to a large extent by the fact that 'a pretty good sale' in the States would mean about double what we should consider 'a pretty good sale' over here. If applied to books published at less than $2.50 and having a sale of less than 2000 copies, Mr. Page's diagnosis unquestionably holds good for English publications. It is not until the 2000[1] mark is passed that profits are made.

A rising royalty meets this precise difficulty, because with most publications (not all) there comes a stage where the available margin increases, and it is equitable that the

[1] In view of the much heavier cost of production in the United States, the more extensive advertising campaign, and the larger overhead which American publishers have to bear, wherever the author says 2000 copies the American reader should read 5000 copies. — F. G.

author should share the benefit, as he would do *ipso facto* under a profit-sharing agreement.

The fact that royalties are almost invariably calculated upon the published price is apt to mislead authors as to the proportion of the proceeds they are being paid. Most authors who were receiving a royalty of ten per cent on the published price would be surprised were they told that they are having nearly, if not quite, one sixth of the publisher's gross receipts. Yet it needs only a simple calculation to demonstrate that ten per cent on the published price is fifteen per cent on two thirds of the published price, which, on an average, represents the maximum the publisher obtains for his wares after travellers' commissions have been deducted.

Agreement forms. Although it is not in the programme printed at the beginning of this chapter, I propose, before passing on to the fourth method of dealing with literary property, to comment upon some of the clauses to be found in most printed forms of royalty agreement. In doing so, I shall take into consideration the criticisms of agreements which have from time to time appeared in the columns of the 'Author.' As previously explained, those criticisms are almost invariably vitiated by the assumption that the agreement form is for a novel, whereas the reverse would be nearer the truth, because probably nine out of ten forms are used for books other than novels. Criticism which may be valid where a novel is concerned may be directly misleading or even nonsense when applied to some other type of book. There may conceivably be wisdom in stipulating that a new novel shall be published at $2.00, and that a

publisher shall have no power to alter the price (that he would not do so unless there were some overwhelmingly good reason need not trouble us!), but it is obviously absurd to expect a publisher to tie himself down in a similar fashion in the case, let us say, of a work on economics, the final length of which is still uncertain, or a book of travel for which the illustrations have still be to selected; and it is for such cases that printed agreement forms are used.

The first thing in every agreement is a recital of the parties to the agreement, and already at this stage there is a divergence of opinion between author and publisher. With the contention of the Authors' Society that a contract for publication should be made with a firm only, and not with its successors and assigns, it would be easy to sympathize, were there no such things as limited liability companies; but in these days when nearly all publishing businesses are companies, public or private, the arguments lose a good deal of force. However disadvantageous to an author it might be for the proprietor of X.Y.Z. Ltd. to assign his contracts to Q.R. Ltd., the fact that the agreements were not assignable need not stop him. He would not worry about the agreements, he would transfer his shares instead [1] — a very questionable advantage to the author.

But there is behind the contention a very real grievance. It arises in the case of the liquidation or bankruptcy of a publishing house, when, despite the fact that substantial sums are owing to them and their agreements have been

[1] In other words, Q.R. Ltd. would buy sufficient shares to secure a controlling interest in X.Y.Z. Ltd., thus taking over the X.Y.Z. business without a single agreement having to be assigned.

flagrantly broken, authors are unable to secure release from their contracts.

This is obviously unjust, causes needless suffering to authors, and is easily remediable. Why the Authors' Society has not devoted to this point a fraction of the energy it has given to some quite fanciful grievances has always puzzled me. To prevent the publisher from assigning the agreement is no cure, though there would be no harm in stipulating that he should not do so were the royalties in arrear. The remedy is to insert in the 'out of print' clause some words to the following effect, 'or if, by reason of bankruptcy, payment due to the author shall not be made as specified herein, then all rights conveyed in this agreement shall revert to the author without further notice.' Personally, I should be inclined to go still further and provide for the rights to revert at any time if after due notice the royalty payments remained unpaid more than (say) three months after the due date.

It has been suggested to me that some publishers would consider this insulting. To any such it is easy to point out that the clause is obviously not going to be operative in their case, and to inquire what ground, therefore, they have for objecting. But it is not for me to teach the Authors' Society its business!

To the publisher it is a distinct advantage that the parties to the agreement should include his successors and assigns as well as the author's executors, and most agreements contain this provision.[1]

[1] Under German law (unless otherwise provided in the contract) the assignment of an individual book is not permissible without the au-

The opening clause usually prescribes the date for the delivery of the manuscript and the time within which it is to be published. Though seldom mentioned, it may be just as important that the time to be occupied by the author in proof-reading should be stated. Most authors are commendably prompt, but there are others. . . .

The next clause probably opens with some such phrase as 'In consideration of the payments hereinafter mentioned,' and goes on to define the rights to be assigned to the publisher. According to the Authors' Society, the utmost a publisher ought to have is a terminable licence to print a stipulated number of copies for sale at a defined price in a restricted area and, of course, in one language only. It is just possible — probable, in fact — that some further limitations have been overlooked. After careful study of the restrictions, one is left with the feeling that in granting a licence to peep at his manuscript an author has perhaps done more than is wise! Probably, in fact, that the length and direction of the glimpse ought to be restricted! Let us examine all these limitations:

(1) That in a royalty agreement the author should not assign the copyright, but that it should be a terminable licence for a restricted period of years. Here the weight of the evidence is against any such restriction. How much time and attention, let alone capital, would you expect a man to expend upon a house or other property of which he only had a short lease? Obviously the more permanent

thor's consent — such consent not to be unreasonably withheld. The original publisher still remains responsible. On the other hand, the assignment of groups of publications or the whole of a publisher's list is permissible.

the publisher's interest in a book, the greater inducement he has to exploit its possibilities. Without adequate security, the better kind of publishing — the publishing of books of permanent rather than ephemeral interest — would become even more difficult than it is at present.

What publisher could, for instance, embark upon such an undertaking as the 'Library of Philosophy' if the occasional volumes that proved financial successes were liable to be transferred to his competitors? As well ask a fruit-grower to plant an apple orchard in ground of which he was only offered a five years' lease as expect a publisher of serious books to accept a short terminable licence. There are, doubtless, exceptional cases; but in general and in the long run an agreement for the duration of copyright is advantageous and equitable to both parties, and essential to the publisher.

The only serious objection to be encountered is that a change in the ownership of the publishing business might inflict hardship upon the author. This, however, is a point that could be met by some less drastic provision than a short terminable licence.

(2) That the rights conveyed should be restricted to book publication in the English language. This point has been touched upon in connection with profit-sharing agreements, and the same remarks apply. The criterion should be, Who, in fact, will see that the rights in question *are* exploited? In any case, the publisher will need the *exclusive* right to publish in book form in the English language.

(3) That the territory should be, as far as possible, re-

stricted. There should be no such restrictions upon the activities of the British publisher in selling the English edition. The only possible exception would be the American market in the comparatively few cases where dual typesetting and separate publication in the States were probable. Here it may be well to add that the practice of throwing in the Canadian market with the American rights is to be deplored.

The occasional necessity of reserving the right to publish a separate edition for circulation on the Continent has already been discussed.

(4) That the published price should be defined may be theoretically desirable, but in practice is seldom possible at the time of signing the agreement. The probable price should, of course, be stated.

To sum up: the minimum a book publisher requires is the exclusive right for the duration of copyright to produce a work (or any substantial part thereof) in book form in the English language throughout the world (possibly excluding the U.S.A.).[1] In most cases it will be inadvisable to exclude the U.S.A., and in many cases it may prove expedient to entrust the publisher with translation or other rights. Several distinguished authors who started by excluding American and translation rights from agreements with my firm now, of their own accord, include them. One author solemnly excludes this, that, and the other right,

[1] The minimum requirement of the American publishers for an American author is the assignment of the copyright for the duration thereof, with the exclusive right to publish in book form in the English language, with the possible though not desirable exception of the British Empire other than Canada.—F. G.

and then, as soon as the agreement is signed, requests us to act as if the rights had *not* been excluded!

The next clause in the agreement before me states that 'All details as to the time and manner of production and advertisement (except as hereby otherwise provided) and the number and destination of free copies for the Press or others, shall be left to the sole discretion of the publishers, who shall bear all expenses of production, except the amount (if any) of author's corrections by which the cost of corrections of proofs other than printers' errors, at per printers' invoice, exceeds per cent of the cost of type-setting, which extra amount shall be borne by the author.'

This sounds more formidable than it is in practice. Some one must have the control, and as he who pays the piper calls the tune, in a royalty agreement it is left to the publisher to do so. But that does not mean that if the author particularly wants a blue binding the publisher will insist upon making it magenta. Most publishers are ready and willing to put themselves to considerable trouble to please authors in matters of this kind, particularly when the authors are specific and not vague in their requirements. It costs no more to bind a book in one colour than in another, and if a publisher has his own idiosyncrasies in such a matter, he has plenty of opportunities of indulging them, and has no need to begrudge an author one such chance. My advice to authors who have set their hearts upon binding of a particular colour is either to send a pattern of the colour, or, better still, to name a book published by the same publisher which is bound in the cloth approved. Nowadays binding cases are seldom made until an ad-

vance copy of the book is ready, so that to wait for the publisher to submit samples may mean delay.

The allowance made to authors for corrections has been the subject of endless controversy. If a manuscript is typewritten, the typescript can be corrected just as well as the printed proof, though some points needing correction will elude even a vigilant author until he sees the printed page. If the typescript has already been heavily corrected, it will be much cheaper for the author to have it retyped, and then to revise it finally with great care and attention, than to incur a correction bill. It is doubtful whether there is any direction where there is so little to show for your money as in expenditure on corrections. The printers' charge works out at about 4*s*. to 4*s*. 6*d*. per hour, and any one who has tried his hand at making alterations in standing type, as I have done for days on end, will know how little can be accomplished in an hour. Whether an author exceeds the allowance depends more upon the care with which the manuscript is prepared before it is handed to the publisher than upon the generosity of the publisher's allowance, strange as this may sound. Ten to twelve per cent of the cost of composition is in my opinion a fair allowance in the case of a typewritten manuscript that has been carefully gone through, but not even fifty per cent will suffice a careless author. The point is touched upon again in the chapter on Production.[1]

Clause 4 deals with the published price — a subject al-

[1] In this country the printer's charge for corrections ranges from $2.00 to $2.50 per hour. Houghton Mifflin Company allow the author for his corrections twenty per cent of the cost of the composition. — F. G.

ready discussed — and contains two provisions which are not always included by publishers, though pressed for (with justice) by the Authors' Society, viz., 'That the book shall not be remaindered within two years of first publication,' and secondly, that the author shall be given the option of purchasing the remainder stock. This latter provision, though equitable enough, is apt to prove onerous in practice. Some of the best remainder buyers are passing birds, who have to be caught on the wing. Even forty-eight hours' delay may mean an opportunity forever lost, and how often can one be sure of an answer from an author in forty-eight hours, or, for that matter, an answer at all?

Clauses 5 and 6 deal with the rendering of accounts, a subject which is examined fully in a later chapter. As will be seen, the author should receive a complete statement every year with an interim statement at the half year, if the sales warrant it. In the case of a first novel, or a book that is unlikely to pay its way, it is not unusual for a certain number of copies to be free of royalty, and such an arrangement, despite all that is said to the contrary, is often equitable to both parties. It merely ensures that during the period when the proceeds of the sales have not even covered the printing bill — let alone yielded a profit to anybody — the publisher should not have to add to his loss the payment of royalties to the author. In effect, it makes the arrangement more akin to a profit-sharing agreement whilst still preserving the royalty principle. In some agreements the royalty is payable on the 'free' copies, in the event of over 1000 or more than say 1500 copies being sold, in which case, unless the publisher is considerably out

of pocket on the undertaking, the author receives the full royalty.

Clause 7 specifies the royalties to be paid and provides that they shall be calculated on the published price, if the copies are sold at above a certain proportion of the published price. Many agreements say 'at above half price,' others 'at above one third' or 'one quarter.' It is a point upon which there has been a good deal of controversy, and, as is usual with all such controversies, it has been discussed and judged with novels primarily in mind. Now, with novels it is possible to justify fixing the dividing line at one quarter, because, in practice, a novel is saleable on the usual trade terms for novels, i.e., above half price, or failing that, as a remainder, which, in the case of a 7*s.* 6*d.* novel, is below one quarter of the published price. There is no halfway about it. This is not, however, true of other publications. In the first place the 'remainder' will quite possibly fetch more than a quarter, though less than half the published price. More important still, there may be openings to be exploited for special editions at reduced prices to organizations or societies such as the National Home Reading Union, the Workers' Educational Association, the Plebs League, and a hundred and one other bodies. Publishers are constantly accused of lack of enterprise in not following up such opportunities, but it is obvious that they cannot do so if their agreements do not give them the power. To the retort that each opening should be referred to the author, my reply is that, if there were time, I should communicate with the author, even though there was no legal necessity to do so, but in most cases

there is not time. Supplementary agreements spell delay, and before the negotiations are completed, the opportunity has slipped by. The test is how the thing works out in practice; success is apt to come to the seller who can give a quick decision.

It is easy to demonstrate that any particular dividing line is unfair to one or other party, if not absurd in its incidence. If, for instance, a publisher of a $1.50 book, who had agreed to pay the full royalty on all copies sold at above one quarter of the published price, had the good fortune to find a remainder buyer willing to pay 38 cents per copy, he would be much worse off than if he sold the stock for, say, 30 cents, or even 25 cents per copy. If the full royalty were 20 per cent and the amount payable on remainder sales 10 per cent (it would probably be 5 per cent), the disadvantage would be substantial. Here is how it would work out: 20 per cent on $1.50 = 30 cents, which leaves 8 cents (out of the 38 cents) for the publisher, i.e., less than the cost of the binding: 10 per cent on 30 cents = 3 cents, leaving 27 cents for the publisher, i.e., sufficient to make it worth while to bind any stock still unbound. A more equitable solution would obviously seem to be a sliding scale, e.g.:

(1) The full royalty on the published price on all copies sold at above half the published price.

(2) The full royalty calculated upon the exact amount received on sales at or below half price, but above one quarter.

(3) A nominal royalty of five per cent on the net receipts of all copies sold at or below one quarter of the published price.

Copies disposed of under category 3 would almost invariably be sold at less than the cost of manufacture, and in such cases would, in contracts with American publishers, carry no royalty. In England the custom is to pay a nominal five per cent royalty on the amount received, however heavy the loss on the copies sold, if they are sold as books, not, of course, if they are sold as waste paper for pulping. Whether there is any justification for the payment of even a nominal royalty on copies sold below cost is an open question, but the sum is never substantial, and the English plan has the advantage of securing to the author definite information as to the amount the books realized.

Authors would never think of asking an American publisher for a royalty on remainder sales below cost; but if English publishers attempted to include the same provision, there would be an outcry. I might go further, and add a more general statement that if English authors would sign contracts with English publishers on the terms and conditions which they are usually prepared to accept from American publishers, the path of the English publisher would be a good deal rosier.[1]

The clause referring to the royalties often includes a provision that thirteen copies shall be reckoned as twelve, in continuance of a very old custom of supplying a 'baker's dozen,' i.e., throwing in the thirteenth copy gratis. Some

[1] The American practice of paying on all sales at a reduced price a royalty of ten per cent of the price actually received, unless the price is cost or less — in which case no royalty is paid — is a fair one and simple in accounting. The roses which the author sees blooming along the path of the American publisher are not without their own peculiar thorns. — F. G.

firms have discarded the method, but it has certain great advantages which are examined in connection with 'trade terms.' At the end of the clause will usually be found the somewhat obvious but necessary statement that 'no royalties will be paid upon any copies presented to the author or others, or to the Press, or destroyed by fire or in transit.'

Separate clauses will define the royalties to be paid on (*a*) any special editions for America and the British dominions; (*b*) cheap editions.

With regard to (*a*), it is well that authors should realize that a 'special edition' is not necessarily a specially printed edition. It *may* be separately printed, but it is more usually part of the English edition set aside for the purpose and for which, if the sale is to America, new title-pages are printed, bearing the American publisher's imprint. Most novels and some other books are issued in colonial editions. These may be in cheaper binding and will probably have the words 'Colonial Edition' printed on either the title-page or jacket. In some instances, apart from the substitution of the words 'Colonial Edition' for the English price, there is nothing to distinguish such copies from those sold in England. The royalties paid on these special editions are almost invariably calculated upon the exact amount received by the publisher, though in the case of colonial editions of novels it is quite usual to fix an exact sum, e.g., threepence per copy. The purport of these 'special editions' and their importance is examined elsewhere. Meanwhile I should like to emphasize that they are not, as a rule, separately manufactured. Many 'griev-

ances' arise from the failure of authors to grasp this elementary point.

With regard to (*b*), the Authors' Society contends that no cheaper edition should be allowed to be published without the sanction of the author within two years from the date of first publication, and it is undoubtedly right in so doing; unfortunately, the Society's wording goes on to say that 'if within three years no cheaper edition has been produced by the publisher, then the publisher's right, as far as the cheap edition is concerned, should be determined.' Let us consider what this means. Take the case of a popular work on psychology issued at $2.00, which at the end of two years is selling even better than it did in the first year. If the publisher does not bring out a cheap edition during the third year, he is not only to lose the right of doing so subsequently, when it might be profitable, but to leave the author free to sell some other publisher the right to step in and undersell. Clearly the original publisher is likely to be in the best position to decide the appropriate moment at which a cheap edition should be issued.

The next clause deals with American and translation rights, questions which, like the 'option on the next book,' have been discussed in connection with profit-sharing agreements. But there is one important aspect of the matter which needs further emphasis.[1] It is an undisputed fact that American publishers are often influenced in their decisions concerning manuscripts by unknown or comparatively unknown writers by the judgment of their Eng-

[1] In what follows the American reader may read British for American and *vice versa*. — F. G.

lish colleagues. I do not suggest that all American publishers are favourably influenced by the judgment of all their British colleagues, or *vice versa*. But there is no question that in a very large proportion of cases the imprint of the British publisher (or the good will of his firm, if you prefer it) may be a deciding factor in placing the American rights. Some literary agents claim that their recommendation has equal value, but a moment's reflection will show the absurdity of any such contention. An agent is solely interested in effecting a sale. The publisher, on the other hand, has backed his judgment with his money and his imprint. Is it not natural that his verdict should carry conviction? The amount of conviction will vary according to the publisher's success. In some cases it will be sufficient to enable him to place American rights of a book by an unknown author entirely upon his 'say so,' without the American publisher having read so much as a line of it. Here, then, you have the case of a manuscript becoming readily saleable to an American publisher just because a particular British publisher has decided to take it. (The same thing may be true, but to a lesser extent, in the reverse direction.) But if the publisher in question suggests that he is entitled to some share of the benefit of his own good will, he is liable to be told that he is a thief and a robber.

It has always puzzled me why the Authors' Society, which is rightly insistent upon the claim of the author to benefit by what he has created, should consider it iniquitous for publishers to claim remuneration for what they have created. Of course, many publishers create no good will of the kind I refer to. Their imprint carries no weight,

and they are not entitled to consideration. But a firm that has laboriously built up a reputation for publishing nothing but the best in some particular field, is in a different category. If its imprint automatically makes a book marketable in the States, it is preposterous that the firm should be condemned because it refuses to exclude the American rights either to please a literary agent, who might not otherwise be able to effect a sale, or to please an author and enable him to secure the benefit of his publishers' good will without paying a penny for it.

In the old days the publisher received fifty per cent of American royalties or other rights, and probably got more than he was entitled to. The pendulum has now swung in the opposite direction, and, because a publisher receives (quite rightly) no share in the American or other rights in the work of a successful and well-known author which is sold on the author's name, it is assumed a publisher ought never to receive anything (save possibly an agent's commission of ten per cent), even in cases where the fate of the book in, let us say, the U.S.A. is largely, if not entirely, dependent on whether his imprint is on the book or not. In brief, the publisher is expected to be a philanthropist where his good will is concerned.

This does not, however, seem to me a case where philanthropy is called for. Sensible authors, like most other people, are ready enough to pay for value received and according to the value received, and it is time a reasonable compromise was agreed upon. There is a simple and effective way of testing the indebtedness (if any) to the publisher, viz., to put the question, 'Would the American

or other rights be equally saleable in the reverse order?' — i.e., *before* the English publisher's acceptance had been secured. In the case of most well-known authors, the answer would be in the affirmative: in the case of many of the unknown, in the negative. The extent of the indebtedness would, of course, vary greatly. A further question that might appropriately be asked is, Will the disposal of the particular rights prejudice the sale of the book in its original English edition?

Other points referred to in agreements for certain classes of publication are 'revision,' the 'preparation of an index,' 'the supply of illustrations.'

Revision. This arises chiefly in the case of technical publications. No publisher wants to make revisions if they can possibly be avoided. The reason is self-evident; revisions, whether in standing type or in plates, are very expensive (in many cases they involve the complete resetting of the work), whereas a mere fresh impression, *without* corrections, whether from standing type or plates, leaves the publisher the maximum margin of profit. There is thus no warrant for the assumption that the author needs any other guarantee that the publisher will not make unreasonable demands upon him to bring the work up to date. On the other hand, it is essential to the publisher to know where he stands in this matter and that he should not be called upon for additional payments (over and beyond the royalty) for revisions which both parties agree are necessary. He cannot afford to run the risk which the publication of expensive technical works involves without looking some way ahead. It may be ten years before there is

any return for the initial outlay, and by that time the work may have secured its author the coveted professorship, and he may have lost interest in the subject. Has the publisher no right to be considered? In point of fact, difficulties seldom arise until after the death of an author, when a third party has to be called in to do the revision. Then, who is to decide (*a*) whether revision is called for, (*b*) to whom the work is to be entrusted; and, equally important, who is to foot the bill?

In the rare cases where the author appoints an executor technically equipped, it is possible to answer, 'The author's executor,' but these cases are the exception, not the rule. Usually the executors are without knowledge of, or interest in, the subject of the work, and are often unwilling to make the very slightest sacrifice of immediate interests, however clearly it is to their ultimate advantage. There are other complications, as a recent experience of my own firm will show. A well-known scientist had told us some little time before his death that he wanted his books revised before they were reprinted, and a note was accordingly made in our records. Furthermore, in his will he expressed a wish that revised editions of his works should appear, and made the cost of the revision a charge upon his estate. Here it seemed there would be no difficulty, although the written contract contained no such provision. That was about five years ago. Within a few months of the author's death, the question of reprinting one of his books arose. The solicitors acting for the executors regretted that they were unable to authorize us to take any action, or themselves to do anything (the beneficiaries

were apparently at loggerheads). At the solicitors' request we wrote again after various intervals, but the reply was always the same. To this day nothing has been done. The time has now gone by; the book has been superseded by others, and were the authority forthcoming to-morrow, the reply would be 'Too late.'

To summarize the position, it is clear that :

(*a*) If revision is needed, the author should undertake it, or, alternatively, nominate some one else to do so (the cost in the latter case to be deducted from the royalties).

(*b*) After the author's death, the publishers should have the right to have a scientific or technical work brought up to date by a competent man, and to deduct the cost from the royalties.

In regard to (*c*), the executors should have the right to decide whether they preferred to pay a fee for the revision or to let the reviser share the royalties (such share in no case to exceed one half the amount of the royalties), and the publisher should be under an obligation to make it clear in the new edition what departures had been made from the original work, i.e. the nature and extent of the alterations.

It will, no doubt, be said that it is quite wrong that the publisher should have any such power after the author's death, but with considerable experience of the effects of withholding such power, I can confidently affirm that, with rare exceptions, it is in the author's, quite as much as the publisher's, interests that the publisher should have it. In any case it is essential to the publisher.

Index. The preparation of an index is a laborious task,

but it is just as much part of some books as a table of contents. If, therefore, one is needed, the author should provide it. Whether it is necessary, the author can be left to decide; if he is wise, he will consult his publisher; if he is not, and he omits an index when one ought to be included, every reviewer will relieve the publisher of the necessity of pointing out the defect.

For an index, the *via media* is essential. A too full index, with every slight reference to a subject, is almost as useless as too slight a one. The salient passages should alone be given. It is a mistake in most cases to give *all* the references, printing the important ones in heavily leaded or larger type; this makes the index unnecessarily expensive. Again, in biblical references so many texts are sometimes referred to that the reader despairs, and if he turns them up he finds that many are trivial and might have been left out.

Illustrations are an essential feature of many books. In all such cases, whether they are photographs reproduced in a book of travel or diagrams included in a work on geometry, the illustrations are and should be provided by the author as part of his manuscript. The publisher is entitled to assume that the author has the right, or is in a position to secure the right, to reproduce the illustrations which he is submitting with his manuscript — otherwise, he is offering for sale something which is not his to sell. The practice of 'expecting the publisher to see to that,' and leaving him, if need be, to pay a second time for what he is supposed to have acquired from the author, is indefensible, though in one form or another far too prevalent.

A very usual wording of the clause dealing with illustrations (if such there be) is as follows:

The author shall on delivery of the manuscript supply to the publishers, free of charge and copyright fee, photographs, pictures, maps, and other material from which to illustrate the said work, and the publishers shall prepare blocks therefrom at their own cost for the use of their printers and binders. Such pictures and material supplied by the author shall, when done with, be returned to the author if he so requires, but the publishers shall not be liable for accidental damage thereto, or for loss thereof, in the absence of negligence on their part or on the part of their employees.

Illustrated editions of existing books present an altogether different problem. Here you have, in effect, the collaboration of artist and author, and the only difficulty is to decide the respective importance of their work, and the proportion in which the remuneration should be shared. In some cases, the author commissions the artist and pays him a fixed fee, in which event the publisher has only the author to deal with. More often, the publisher pays the artist, and in that case the expenditure is taken into consideration in fixing the amount of the royalty payable to the author.

Author's free copies. A clause that is common to nearly all royalty agreements entitles the author to receive on publication six presentation copies, and to purchase further copies for personal use on trade terms. A point which authors often overlook is that, unless there is any provision to the contrary, copies purchased by them carry royalty just like any other sales. The copies thus cost less than they appear to do.

The 'out-of-print' clause is the last to be considered, and is of a much more controversial nature, so much so that some publishers refrain from including it, unless specifically asked to do so. Let us admit at once that it is eminently just that an author should be able to regain control of his work when out of print, if, after due notice in writing, the publisher declines or neglects to reprint it; but, and here comes the controversy, this right should be subject to (*a*) the return of any royalties advanced but unearned, (*b*) the taking over upon an agreed basis — half cost or whatever it may be — of any plant such as moulds or stereoplates made exclusively for the work in question. The Authors' Society contends that the author should have the *option* of taking over the plant on advantageous terms, but should be under no obligation to do so — in fact, that it would be unfair to the author to make it obligatory.

If the publisher protests, he is told that as he was not prepared to reprint the book in conformity with the notice, it is clear that he has no further use for the plant, and, therefore, has no grievance. This is based upon a fallacy. The fact that a publisher is unwilling to reprint a book immediately it goes out of print is no evidence that he will not desire to do so later. My own firm has reprinted scores of publications that have been out of print over three years, many that have been out of print over seven or even over ten years. There has never been a year in the history of my firm when we have not had occasion to reprint some old book. Yet the Authors' Society contends that it is just that the potential value of plant, made expressly in the hope of a reprint, should be taken from the publisher with-

out the very smallest consideration or compensation. I can only say that in this matter the Society is not so fair as its members, because I have never yet found an author, to whom I have fully explained the position, who endorsed its view.

There are two points to be remembered:

(1) The author is under no obligation to give notice that he wants to take over the book.

(2) The question of the amount of the compensation is a matter for negotiation.

It is self-evident that if there were any likelihood of the reprint being profitable the publisher would not decline to reprint. Experience shows that to reprint a very slow selling book immediately it goes out of print is to court an almost certain loss, whereas a year or two's delay may make the venture a commercially practicable one, and, incidentally, give the reprint a much better send-off. There are sufficient reasons for this; the stock on hand at the booksellers' gets absorbed; the book gets advertised and asked for in the second-hand trade, and the supply of second-hand copies becomes exhausted; the publisher accumulates orders, so that, when the reprint does eventually come, there is a market awaiting it. The difference is considerable, because, in addition to supplying the outstanding orders, the publisher is usually able to induce booksellers to stock the work again — particularly if the book has been frequently demanded. This gives it a fresh send-off, which, otherwise, would have been impossible.

We see, therefore, that in many cases the reprinting of an out-of-print book resolves itself into a question of the

appropriate time to reprint. On a matter of this kind, whose judgment is likely to be the more sound, the author's or the publisher's?

At the same time, I end where I began, viz., that it is essentially fair that an author should be able to regain control of his work, if it is out of print and the publisher declines or refuses, after due notice, to reprint it. I merely add that, as in most cases it is a question of the right time for reprinting, the author, if he wishes to back his own opinion (or some other firm's opinion), should not expect to do so at his publisher's expense.

There is still another point to be considered. The question whether moulds should or should not be taken has usually to be settled within three months of the completion of the printing, and within, perhaps, a month of publication of the book, when its fate is still hanging in the balance.[1] Moulds facilitate a reprint if one is needed. Is it or is it not in the author's interest that the publisher should be encouraged to lock up his capital in the taking of moulds? But the publisher is not so likely to do so if he knows that he may, at any moment, be deprived of their potential value. He would be more likely to say, in that case, 'There shall be no moulds.' There is no need for me to labour the point — the Authors' Society's position is untenable.

The chief explanation of this unreasonable attitude is that in the event of the proposed new edition being of a different size, the plant would be useless. But why that

[1] The American publisher, who habitually prints from electrotype plates, is not confronted by this question. — F. G.

should entitle the author to deprive the original publisher of the potential use of the plant without some compensation, we are not told. It is apparently assumed that publishers have no rights, or, at any rate, that their side of the question does not call for consideration.

There may have been times when such an attitude was reasonable, but to-day the bad, the almost incredible contracts are not always at the author's expense. Some of those I have seen are just as impossible and intolerable from the publisher's point of view as many of those of which the Authors' Society complains.

Is it not time we had a joint committee of authors and publishers, not to legislate, but to make recommendations considered fair to both parties?

Commission Agreements

'He who pays the piper calls the tune.' There is thus no legitimate ground for any publisher to take exception to the three main points to which the Authors' Society refers in connection with this fourth method of dealing with literary property. In a contract of this kind, the author assumes entire liability for the cost of production and advertisement and is the owner of the stock; the publisher is merely called upon to put his organization at the author's disposal in exchange for a lump-sum payment and a commission on sales. The publisher is entitled to the exclusive sale in the territory he is expected to cover, for a specified period of time, but to no other rights. All such rights as well as the stock remain vested in the author.

The author is entitled in the first place to an exact esti-

mate of the cost of everything for which it is possible to give an estimate in advance; it is desirable that the specifications in the estimate should be as complete as possible, and that an actual specimen page showing the style of typesetting should be submitted. The particulars should include:

(*a*) The number of copies to be printed and the number to be bound.
(*b*) The format of the book and number of pages.
(*c*) The kind of paper to be used.
(*d*) The style of binding, and, if cloth, whether ink or gilt, and whether special lettering is to be cut.
(*e*) The amount to be spent on newspaper or other advertising and the number of review copies for the Press.

The contract should prescribe:

The period within which the production should be completed (excluding time occupied by the author in proof correcting, and, if the corrections are at all heavy, the time occupied by the printers in giving effect to them).

The published price (the author would be well advised to consult the publisher about this.)

The basis upon which the publisher is to account for copies sold and the commission he is to be entitled to deduct from the receipts (the amount the publisher receives depends upon the discount he allows the booksellers and the commission he pays his travellers).

The dates upon which accounts are to be rendered (half yearly during the two years immediately following publication and yearly thereafter is a reasonable basis.)

The publisher will probably protect himself by the addition of several other clauses, e.g.:

(*a*) That after the lapse of *x* years he shall be at liberty

either to return the stock to the author or to sell it off as a remainder, whichever course the author may desire, etc.

(*b*) That he may store the stock at his printers' or binders', and shall not be held accountable for copies destroyed by fire or accidental damage, in the absence of negligence, but shall take out a fire policy at the author's cost, if the author so instructs.

(*c*) That he shall be entitled to debit the author's account with any warehousing charges incurred, provided that such charges shall not exceed the scale rates fixed by the Bookbinders' and Printers' Associations.

(*d*) That he gives no guarantee of securing copyright in the U.S.A. (at the time of writing it cannot be secured in America except by separate printing in the U.S.A.), but will endeavour either to place the rights with, or sell part of the edition to, an American publisher, if the author so desires.

(*e*) That he does not undertake to send out copies 'on sale or return,' and any copies so sent at the author's request shall be at the author's risk.

(*f*) That the author warrants that the work does not violate any existing copyright, and that it contains nothing libellous, etc.

These, in brief, cover the main headings of the agreement, but a further word is necessary about the advertising and the distribution of review copies. The amount to be spent and the number of copies allocated for the Press have probably been settled at the outset, and in most cases the author will be well advised to take advantage of his publisher's experience in deciding the directions in which the money is to be spent and whither the copies are to go. At the same time the control should, theoretically, at any rate, be vested in the author, as in the past, when it was

more customary for book publishers to own periodicals, unscrupulous firms have been known to spend an unreasonable amount in their own publications. In some present-day commission contracts, the author is left free to arrange his own advertising direct, should he wish to do so, and in most, I imagine, the publisher nowadays undertakes to submit for approval, if so desired, a list of the papers in which it is proposed to advertise as well as a list of those to which review copies are to be sent.

The publisher's remuneration is a much more contentious question. As already stated, it takes two forms: a publication fee, which in many cases is included in a lump-sum estimate of the costs of production and publication, but is sometimes charged as a separate item; and a commission on sales. Speaking broadly, authors tend to get about as much or as little service as they pay for. At one time or another I have been consulted about, or shown, the agreements and accounts of a score or more commission publications issued by firms of the highest standing. In each case it was clear the author was, if anything, getting *more* than was being paid for. In one of the instances the author was bitter in his complaints. The publisher, he thought, was obviously 'doing him down,' and had made thousands (*sic*) out of him, because the book had run into six or seven editions and he, the author, had scarcely had a penny. Careful investigation showed that all the publisher had charged was 10 per cent commission on the sales (i.e., less than half his working expenses). The absence of profit was due to the book being published at such a figure as would bring back the original outlay and little more in the event

of the entire edition being sold. When I asked who fixed the selling price at such a low figure, the author replied that he stipulated that the book should not be published at more than 3*s.* 6*d.*, because he thought it would do him good professionally.

I give this illustration because, if a distinguished engineer, such as this author was, accustomed to every kind of calculation, could misjudge the position so hopelessly, it is more than probable that others will do so.

To the uninitiated it would appear that a publisher must obviously make money out of a book which the author has paid to have published. Actually, the better firms with an elaborate and costly organization find it extremely difficult to make commission publications pay at all. The reason is simple: such a publisher's working expenses almost inevitably *exceed* 20 per cent of his turnover, but how often is he allowed as much as 20 per cent commission by an author? Anything in excess of 15 per cent would usually be considered extortionate. This deficiency is, of course, to some extent made good by the amount included in the original estimate by way of publication fee, but what an amount of work, correspondence, interviews, and technical supervision that fee has to cover! Were a publisher paid one third of what a solicitor would charge, he would indeed be fortunate.[1]

[1] In America no 'publication fee' is charged and the average commission is from 20 to 25 per cent. As 20 per cent of the list price works out at 33 ⅓ per cent of the net price actually received, or no more than the normal publishing overhead, it is clear that here too commission books are not taken for profit, but for some of the other reasons stated by the author in the ensuing paragraph. — F. G.

Why then do the better publishers ever handle books on 'commission'? The answer is, many do not, and none accepts more than a small fraction of those offered on a commission basis. To the question, 'Why do they take any at all?' the answer is, 'There are many reasons.' First and foremost, it may be a book that will bring kudos, or open up some useful connection. Secondly, although a commission publication may not bear its full share of working expenses, it may help to meet that part of the overhead charges (such as rent) which has, in any event, to be faced; in other words, it may help as a 'fill up,' particularly in a concern which has either its own printing works or bindery.

In brief, the proportion of books published on commission by the better firms is usually small, and there is generally some good and sufficient reason for acceptance in each individual case. With firms of no particular reputation the position may be very different. Such firms have little or no organization to keep up, and may merely want the use of the author's money and the opportunity of snatching a quick profit in exchange for a minimum service.

In publishing, as in other walks of life, the best and therefore the more costly is usually the cheapest in the long run.

Authors would be well advised to take as much care in choosing a publisher as they would exercise in selecting a solicitor or a doctor (no wise man would choose either on the score of cheapness), and, above all, to refrain from handing over money to firms of which they know nothing without first making proper inquiry regarding their financial standing.

It should be obvious that if a publisher is unwilling to

assume the responsibility for financing any particular venture, he is doubtful about its commercial prospects. No author, therefore, should step in and take the risk in such circumstances, unless he is willing to lose a substantial part of his outlay. The publisher who shows any sign of wanting authors to provide him with capital is probably one to be avoided.

Here let it be said that there are two or three harpies masquerading as publishers who do untold harm to the book craft. Timely inquiry at the offices of the Authors' Society (or even from a responsible bookseller) would prevent any author getting into their clutches.

For my own part I always discourage inexperienced authors from paying for the publication of their own books. If the work has intrinsic value, and the author, with his eyes open, chooses to run the risk and is in a position to lose his money, that is a different question.

One last word before concluding an already overlong chapter.

We have seen that a formal agreement between publisher and author is essential; that a bad agreement with a good publisher is better than a perfect agreement with a bad one. We have discussed how the agreement should be drafted, but we have made no mention of an interesting fact, viz., that *in practice* the agreement is only binding upon the publisher. I do not want any unpleasant insinuations read into that remark. A publisher covenants to do things that are readily enforceable; an author often covenants to do things that are not readily enforceable. Publishers have

their place of business, and an action can be brought against any firm of standing without the slightest difficulty, with the knowledge that, other things being equal, sympathy will be with the author, and with the certainty that if damages are awarded they can be collected. Authors, on the other hand, may be rolling stones, or resident abroad; but even if they were not, a publisher would probably be considered vindictive, however good his case, if he took action, and in the end might well lose more than he could possibly gain. But although in this respect it may be a one-sided affair, a contract is a great protection to the publisher, for it defines and limits the claims that may be brought against him.

At the same time, without wishing to stress the point or to bring any charges against authors as a whole, it is fair to publishers that I should place on record that there must be few firms who have been in business for any considerable length of time who could not produce a score or more unfulfilled or broken contracts which, however bitterly they may have felt about them, they have taken no steps to enforce. The black sheep are not all in the publisher flock, even if they are the only ones of which the public hears.

CHAPTER V

PRODUCTION

It is not possible, even were I competent to attempt such task, to give in a chapter anything approaching a complete account of the numerous and highly technical processes, such as paper-making, block-making, printing, and binding, which are employed in the making of a book. Nor is it necessary, because there exist popular handbooks and learned treatises on all these subjects from which the reader can get more expert and detailed information than I could impart. All that will be attempted here is to put authors in a position to follow intelligently those parts of the processes with which they are likely to come in contact.

It will probably simplify matters if we take each process separately, though in practice several of them are often being dealt with concurrently.

Printing. In an earlier chapter we discussed the process known as 'casting off' a manuscript, i.e., counting the number of words in it and calculating, after making due allowance for such variable factors as 'small type,' etc., how many pages the book will make if printed in such and such a style. But we did not stop to consider a question which arises still earlier, viz., the choice of a printer. To the uninitiated, any printer is a potential book printer, but this is no more the case than that any tailor is competent to make a lady's costume. Either a printer is a book printer or he is not a book printer; the commercial printer who has occa-

sionally printed a book (probably a local directory or a glorified catalogue) is a person to be avoided, if you want a presentable article. The firms which specialize in book printing may be divided roughly into three classes: (1) The creative printers and printers of éditions de luxe; (2) the competent, but usually uninspired; (3) the incompetent, but cheap. In the first category I should place such a firm as the Curwen Press, whose standard of work is a shining example. It is unfortunate that, in common with most of the firms in category 1, their works are in London, where a higher scale of wages obtains than in the provinces. Their prices are thus higher than they would be were their works a little further away.

All the firms in category 2 are to be found in the provinces and Scotland, and between them they do the bulk of the book printing other than perhaps novels. Their prices do not vary greatly — partly because the introduction of a careful costing system[1] has shown them what their working expenses are, but chiefly because the rates of wages do not vary very greatly. The difference between the rates payable say at Edinburgh, Plymouth, and Colchester is negligible compared with that between those three places and London. Wages represent at least half the printer's bill, so that the rate paid is one of the chief determining factors in the price. It is not, however, the only one, because almost as important is the completeness and the competence with which the work is done.

It is obvious that if part of the process be omitted or

[1] Some day publishers may be wise enough to follow their example and compare notes more freely.

skimped, a saving of wages may be effected, and it is here that the printers in category 3 come in. They are to be found, for the most part, in the smaller provincial towns. Their output is not considerable, and it is seldom that they are trusted with the printing of anything less straightforward than a novel. It is apt to prove disastrous when they are, because they pay no competent reader to check the proofs; have no one able to make a trustworthy 'cast off,' and spend no adequate time upon 'making ready' before machining, without which satisfactory results are unobtainable. The extent to which some publishers employ firms of this kind has always surprised me. In my judgment it is false economy, and the practice of devoting unlimited time and energy to tracking down some printer who will cut his price a few pence further is surely based upon a wrong assumption, viz., that printing prices show a large margin of profit to the printer. There are a few firms of book printers who, because of quite special circumstances, make considerable profits, but they are the exception, not the rule. It is a point upon which I happen to possess inside information and can speak with certainty. Furthermore, the employment of incompetent firms lowers the standard of printing. The only way better firms can compete is to skimp their work and, in effect, this is what they are often made to do, instead of being encouraged to improve their standard. Mention may here be made of the good work that is being accomplished by the Double Crown Club in raising the quality of printing. Even if economic considerations prevent some of us from following as closely in their footsteps as we might desire, it is an in-

estimable advantage to have clearly before us the ideal at which we ought to aim.

Preparation of manuscripts. However excellent the printer selected, it is necessary for the publisher to 'prepare the manuscript for press,' though the thoroughness with which this is done, and the amount of work necessary, will vary according to the kind of printer and the experience of the author. The only manuscripts that have come my way which it would have been safe to hand without examination to the printers, were the work of those two excellent translators, Eden and Cedar Paul. If all manuscripts were as carefully, nay meticulously, prepared as theirs, publishing would be robbed of some of its anxieties.

For the most part, manuscripts are typed in these days, but even so, few typists fulfil the barest minimum of what might be expected of them when producing the typescript of a book. Is it unreasonable, for instance, to suggest that they should have a 'Rule of the House' as a book printer does, and thus preserve some measure of uniformity in such matters as the spelling of proper names and the use of capital letters; that they should know that single underlining indicates 'italics,' double underlining 'small caps,' and treble underlining 'large capitals'; that they should single space and indent quoted matter and, obvious though it would seem, type out a proper title-page and list of contents? I would urge any typist, who happens to read this, to go a step further and to take note of the preliminary pages of any well-produced book and see what more is needed, e.g., a bastard title (or, as it is more generally, though inaccurately, called, a half-title) and a page cor-

responding with the back of the title on which the bibliography, copyright notices, etc., are given. If it is known that the book is to be illustrated, it is quite simple to include a blank page headed 'List of Illustrations,' even though the illustrations have not yet been selected. Similarly, blank pages headed 'Preface' or 'Introduction' should be added, if either is contemplated, but not yet written. These details have an added importance now that it is customary, where possible, to paginate the 'prelims' with the text.

Some publishers employ an assistant whose sole or main task is to prepare manuscripts for press and to eliminate as far as possible all cause for subsequent corrections. If authors and typists were better informed as to what is needed, this would be superfluous.

In these days of machine composition, where the operators are highly paid and the capital value of the machinery involved is also high, the saving made by well-edited typescript is considerable.

The choice of the size of the page to be used is governed by various considerations. If the manuscript is that of a novel intended for publication at $2.00, the size of the paper is more or less defined by that fact, as nearly all novels are produced crown 8vo size, i.e., 7½ in. × 5 in., and are printed on sheets of what is termed quad crown paper, i.e., 30 in. × 40 in. (with the advent of ever larger machinery, double quad crown, i.e., sheets measuring 60 in. × 40 in., is now sometimes used, particularly when large numbers are to be printed). Similarly, if the manuscript is that of a biography, it will probably be printed on demy paper, though

if it is a particularly long book a still larger size may be selected. For the sake of reference I give three or four of the standard sizes in constant use.

Name	Size of Page	Size of Sheet most usually printed	Purpose for which it is usually adopted
Foolscap.	4¼ × 6¾	27 × 34 (Quad Fcp)	Pocket Editions
Crown...	7½ × 5	30 × 40 (Quad Crown)	Novels
Demy ...	5⅝ × 8¾	35 × 45 (Quad Demy)	Biographies, Books of Travel, History, etc.
Royal ...	6¼ × 10	40 × 50 (Quad Royal)	

Intermediate sizes are often adopted when the paper is being made specially. A publisher may, for instance, have his novels printed on paper measuring 31 in. × 41 in. instead of 30 in. × 40 in., thus giving them a more handsome appearance. My own firm often uses paper 32 in. × 42½ in., which is halfway between crown and demy (called large crown).

But all departures from standard sizes, attractive as they may be and often are, automatically involve the special making of the paper, and it is well that authors should realize what that may mean. In the ordinary way, it is seldom practicable to make less than a ton, or to be sure of doing so in less than a fortnight; furthermore, the quantity may vary as much as ten per cent, so that when you order paper for say 2000 copies, you may receive barely sufficient for 1800, or be compelled to take enough for 2200. These things may not be particularly inconvenient when the first edition is being produced, but might easily prove disastrous were reprints wanted in a hurry, or were only a small impression called for.

The question will be asked why publishers do not carry stocks of paper in the sizes they favour. The answer is that many of us do, but that it only surmounts part of the difficulty, because even if the size is right, the weight and bulk of the paper may be wrong, and these vary just as much as the size. There is the further trouble that, despite the utmost forethought, the paper is sure to be in stock at the wrong printer's when it is urgently wanted, thus involving double expense for carriage.

The use of standard size papers obviates all these difficulties, because they are always obtainable at a moment's notice from the wholesale stationers and in varying weight and bulk; in practice, therefore, they are the sizes most frequently adopted, even though a special size would often look better.

The kind of type to be used and the *type area* of the page are the next points to be considered. Until comparatively recent times all books were hand set; nowadays machine setting is the rule and hand setting the exception.

I do not propose even to attempt a description of any of the highly complicated typesetting machines that are used, because in these days one or other of them is to be seen at almost any printer's. Suffice it to say that lumps of metal are put into the melting-pot in one part of the machine and freshly made type, duly set up and spaced, comes out at another, ready to be made up into pages. In the Monotype machine, which is now the most frequently used for bookwork, each letter is separate, whereas in both the Linotype and the Typograph the whole line of type is cast in one piece called a 'slug,' and the subsequent addition of so

much as a comma, therefore, involves in their case the resetting of an entire line.

When the machine setting was first used for books the results were generally deplorable, but to-day, thanks largely to the efforts of enthusiasts like Mr. Gerard Meynell and Mr. Stanley Morison and the enterprise of the late H. M. Duncan, of the Lanston Monotype Company, it is possible to use some of the best founts of type and yet have the books machine set. The most important point of all to remember is that good results can only be obtained by the use of good founts of type.

Only twenty years ago people who would have been shocked at a mixture of two schools of architecture looked complacently upon typesettings in which half a dozen styles of lettering were mixed. Fortunately for the general standard of typography in England, those days are rapidly passing and there is an insistent demand for good type with a definite character about it. Whether it be Caslon or Garamond, an old-face type or old-style, is a matter of personal taste and fitness for the particular purpose for which the type is wanted. The important thing is to have a type that is both readable and beautiful, as are all those which have stood the test of time.

Even so, viligance may be needed, because the most beautiful page of type may so easily be marred by the use of a headline of some different fount. It is thus necessary not only to select a suitable type, but to see to it that it is used throughout the book. Such a precaution is unnecessary in the case of printers in category 1, but not, alas! in the case of many of those in category 2. Of category 3 the less said the better.

Type sizes, of course, vary; those most frequently used in books are:

PICA (pronounced pī′ka), now known as 12 point.

SMALL PICA, now known as 11 point.

LONG PRIMER (prim-er), now known as 10 point.

BOURGEOIS (burjoyce), now known as 9 point.

BREVIER (breveer), now known as 8 point.

The type area of the page is often governed by economic as well as æsthetic considerations. We most of us like wide margins and generous spacing of the type, but if good value in books consists in giving the maximum length for the minimum price, wide margins and generous spacing are not compatible with good value. For instance, many of the volumes in the Everyman Library, which represent the last word in good value, are 'set solid' (that is, without leads[1] between the lines of type) and have margins which leave much to be desired; but the books are not to be condemned on that account. None the less, it is of the utmost importance that full consideration should be given to the desirability of good margins, sufficient spacing between the lines, and equal spacing between the words, when determining the type area of the page. For that reason it is essential that the specimen page submitted by the printer should be on paper of the size it is intended to use, but — and this is a point for authors to bear in mind — it is improbable that

[1] The width of leads is measured by 'points' (see type measurements above). A one-point lead is one seventy-second of an inch. This page has a three-point lead between the lines.

the paper will be of the quality and weight finally chosen, as just then it might well be premature to make the final selection.

The arrangement of the type area on the page, or, to put the same thing the reverse way, the width of the blank margins at the top, bottom, and sides of the page, needs most careful attention, and is not a matter that can be left to chance. The technical term used is 'imposition'; it covers not only the arrangement of the individual page, but the whole sheet, of which the page may only be a thirty-second part. This is a much more complicated matter than it seems at first, and we shall come to it in a moment.

Galley proofs. Before the question of imposing the type arises, it has to be composed, and whether it be hand set or machine set, it is not at first broken up into pages, but is set in long galleys. Only a few years ago it was a customary thing (and still is in America) to send out first proofs in this form. Such proofs, called 'galley' or 'slip' proofs, are still necessary where extensive additions or deletions will be made in the proof, which will involve changes in the pagination, i.e., will involve carrying matter back or forward to another page. Contrary to the current opinion among authors, galley proofs afford no economy if, as is usually the case, the corrections do not materially alter the number of words in any given page. Furthermore, should the additions or deletions happen to come at the end of a chapter, it may be quite as simple to deal with them in page proof as in galley proof. It is usual, therefore, nowadays in England for the first proofs to

be sent out in page form. The custom has been accentuated since the war by the printers' practice of making a much more formidable charge for 'making up' if they have first to submit proofs in galley and then subsequent proofs in page. The advantages of 'going straight into page' are many, and the disadvantages in most cases negligible. There will always be a few instances in which galley proofs are essential, but they will remain the exception. Page proofs are easier to handle; they are more serviceable as advance material to travellers; more useful for press purposes; and, above all, more economical. Two further advantages are that the index can be made as the proofs are first read (which helps in the detection of inconsistency); and that one has no anxiety about errors made by the printer during pagination. But if galley proofs are eliminated a little more forethought is needed about various minor matters. The importance of preparing the manuscript for press has already been emphasized; extra care needs to be exercised if the book is to be paged right away, particularly if the preliminary pages are paginated with the text.

The 'prelims,' the expression used to designate these preliminary pages, means in practice the first eight or sixteen pages of a book, and covers the Bastard Title, the Title-Page itself, the Bibliography, Dedication, Contents, Preface, etc. The 'lay-out' or arrangement of this part of a book calls for special attention. In the typography and planning of the 'prelims' can immediately be detected the work of an expert or incompetent hand. There is first a prescribed order in which such things as Contents and Lists

of Illustrations, Prefaces, and Introductions should appear. Upon some points there are divergencies of opinion, but the principles laid down by Dr. Ballinger, of the National Library of Wales, might with advantage be generally adopted. In the course of an interesting letter in 'The Times Literary Supplement' of April 6, 1922, he wrote as follows:

> When a Preface exceeds two or three pages it should be treated as an Introduction. If this could be agreed, the following order for the preliminary pages might be used without inconvenience: I. Title (with bibliographical note on the verso); II. Preface; III. Contents; IV. List of illustrations; V. Introduction; VI. Text.

But the arrangement of the individual pages is of no less importance. The title-page in particular should be 'a thing of beauty,' and the best results are not obtained by leaving the position of the wording to chance or the whim of an incompetent printer. The setting of a title-page may present a typographical problem of considerable difficulty. There are few cases where careful thought is not required. Some beautiful title-pages are not set up in type at all, but are drawn by an artist and then reproduced in the form of a line block; these, of course, form the exception, not the rule.

Many publishers print on the title-page itself their 'mark' or 'colophon'; it is doubtful whether this is the most suitable place, as it leads to a certain monotony and may often be an obstacle to a good piece of setting; the bastard title is better, but even here it may be too prominent or overpowering; probably the traditional position of

the colophon at the close of the book would be more appropriate, if any general rule is to be laid down.

Whether the date is given on the front or back of the title-page is unimportant *so long as it is given.* Were it certain that the book was never going to be reprinted there would be much to be said in favour of putting it on the front. But if it is desirable — as I feel most strongly it is — to ensure the giving of the completest possible bibliographical information in the case of reprints, it is much wiser to begin by giving the date on the back.

If the date is on the front and a reprint is hurriedly ordered, the new date will be substituted for the old, and the desirability of a bibliography may be forgotten. Should the date be given on the back in some such form as

First published in 1925

the mere addition of the words 'Second impression, 1926' automatically forms the desired bibliography, whether any one happens to think about it or not. All librarians and others to whom bibliographies are of special importance would therefore be wise to advocate the printing of the date on the *back* of the title-page.

This brings us to the use of the words 'Impression' and 'Edition.' It cannot be too strongly urged that the word 'impression' should be confined to reprints in which there are no alterations of any kind, and similarly the word 'edition' should not be used unless the reprint contains revisions or additions or represents a change of format. (The republication at a different price or in a different form of part of an impression which has already been placed on

the market is best described as a 'reissue.') It should not necessarily be inferred, because the word 'edition' is used, that the alterations are extensive. If a book is 'considerably enlarged' the publisher may usually be trusted to say so. An impression or edition may consist of any number of copies; a book that is in its fifth impression may not have sold to the extent of one that has not been reprinted. But the fact that most printers now charge for machining any number less than 1000 at the scale rate for 1000 makes it unprofitable to print less than that quantity; so whereas reprints of 500 were at one time a frequent occurrence, there is a tendency to-day to feel that if it is not worth reprinting 1000 it is not worth reprinting at all, except in the case of some big and expensive work. On the Continent, and particularly in Germany, an edition usually means 1000 copies, and a publisher printing 5000 copies may even announce them as 1–5 editions.

The back of the title-page serves other purposes. Here are to be found such notices as 'All rights reserved' or 'Copyright in the U.S.A.,' and, last but not least in importance, the printers' imprint, preceded by the words 'Printed' or, as some people prefer it, 'Made in Great Britain,' or whatever the country of production may be. The inclusion of the printers' imprint is compulsory in any case; but it is the import or export of copies without the country of origin clearly printed upon them that brings the fact home and gives the inexperienced publisher his first acquaintance with the Merchandise Marks Act or American customs regulations.

The inclusion of such things as dedications, short pre-

faces, etc., in the 'prelims' is a simple matter, if thought of in time, but apt to prove rather expensive and troublesome after the type has been made up *if no pages have been left for them*, as well as to cause delays at the printers' if settled at the last minute. It is a safe rule, when in doubt, to leave an extra two blank pages in the 'prelims,' because if they are not wanted, they can be left as two extra blank pages at the beginning of the book. Whereas, should an extra page for which no provision has been made be needed, it may have to be separately printed and specially 'tipped' or 'pasted in' as a frontispiece often is.

Head-lines also need forethought; few things are more annoying to the intelligent reader of a serious work than to see the title repeated at the top of page after page on both the left (verso) and right-hand (recto) sides. To avoid this the publisher often gives standing instructions to his printer that, failing any advice to the contrary, the title of the book should be used as the left and the title of the chapter as the right-hand head-line. This is a good serviceable arrangement, and has the great merit of enabling the printer to complete the work at once. Furthermore, it facilitates the identification of loose sheets, a point emphasized by Dr. Ballinger. Some authors, however, prefer the title of each chapter as the left-hand head-line, and a running head-line, descriptive of the contents of the actual page, on the right. If this plan is adopted, the right-hand head-lines have to be left blank for the author to fill in when he receives the proofs. This means an extra item on the correction bill, and it should be clearly agreed between author and publisher whether it is to be regarded as a

'correction' or not. Whichever method of dealing with head-lines is adopted, it would be very helpful to the printer if authors who favour long titles to their chapters would indicate on the manuscript an abbreviated version for use as the head-line of the page. Printers are usually very clever at finding the best abbreviation, but as it often means putting special emphasis on part of the chapter title, it is a point much better settled by the author, and preferably before the typesetting begins.

Authors often suggest that they shall deliver *part* of their manuscript, so that the printers may make a start. This is seldom, if ever, advisable, unless the complete manuscript has already been 'cast off' and has merely gone back to the author for verbal polishing, or for some purpose which will not change its final length. For the printer to go ahead with an instalment would, in most cases, be making a false start and mean loss of time. It would almost certainly prove uneconomical.

Modern printing machinery is constructed to print 32 (if not 64) pages of a book on one side of a sheet. The maximum advantage is thus secured by making a book consist of so many sheets of 32 pages each — in other words, a multiple of 32. Hence, when we speak of a $2.00 novel being a ten-sheet book, we mean that it contains $10 \times 32 = 320$ pages.

A sheet is printed to fold, and the number of times it is folded determines whether it will contain 4, 8, 16, 32, or 64 pages. Sixty-four pages may be printed as one sheet, or, at the most, two sheets of 32 pages each; on the other hand the printing of 56 pages involves the printing of not less than

three sheets, of 32 pages, 16 pages, and 8 pages respectively, unless eight superfluous blank pages are added, thus making a 64-page sheet. This explains why nearly all books (whether the fact is revealed by the pagination or not) consist of an even number of pages, usually a multiple of 32, in almost every case a multiple of 16.

Now, it is desirable to make the book consist of an 'even working' of 32 pages, and a page must be chosen which will produce this result. It is easy to realize that the addition of a line to each page will reduce the number of pages, or that the making of each page an 'em' narrower will increase the number of pages, but it may not be so readily understood that two founts of type of the same nominal size may produce different results, some founts having a broader face than others and tending to occupy more space and thus run into more pages. Very exact adjustments are therefore possible if the *complete* manuscript is in the printer's hands and there are no variable factors. The printer should, for instance, know before he starts work whether there is to be an index and how many pages to allow for it. It is better to overestimate rather than underestimate the number required, because it is easy to fill up blank pages with advertisements,[1] whereas an extra two pages would have to be specially printed; and if less than four pages were included, they would have to be 'pasted in' at the end of the book.

To show at a glance some variations in type I have asked the printer to give two specimens below, both of them in pica type.

[1] Except in American school textbooks where they are prohibited by school authorities.

These few lines are set in twelve-point Century Face, which is a very broad-faced type. Note the number of letters and words in each line.

These few lines are set in twelve-point Caslon Old Face, which has a narrower face. Note the extra letters which can thus be included in each line.

A marginal note.

At this stage other questions may arise such as marginal notes.[1] These materially increase the cost because, apart from the additional typesetting involved, they either increase the area of the page and thus the cost of 'making up' the page (the compositor's remuneration being based upon the superficial area), or, if the page be made narrower to allow for them, increase the number of pages. Another method is the 'cut-in note,' which avoids increasing the area of the page, but complicates the type-setting and is rather more costly than a marginal note. Cheaper alternatives are 'cross-heads,' 'shoulder-heads,' and 'side-heads,' of which examples are given.

A cut-in note

THE SIGNALMAN'S CONTROL
(Cross-head)

THE SIGNALMAN'S CONTROL
(Shoulder-head) Always a separate line, full out.

The Signalman's Control. This is a specimen of a side-head. Indented 1 em, and run on, not a separate line.

Some volumes, too, have several sub-heads. First, one in small capitals, centred; the second, in clarendon, as a

[1] The term 'side note' is ambiguous and should be avoided.

'shoulder-head' and separate line; and the third in italic, run on with a metal rule.

Proofs. Although it is usual to print 32 pages and even 64 pages in one sheet, the proofs are almost invariably sent out in sections of 16 pages, and the book, when finally bound, will probably be in 16-page sections (it is not convenient to sew larger sections together). Each of these sections is numbered on the first page, sometimes with the ordinary arabic numerals, but more usually with the letters of the alphabet. Most people have at some time observed stray letters of the alphabet on pages 17, 33, 49, 65, etc., of a book, but few, except the initiated, have realized their purpose, which is to facilitate the 'collating' or gathering together of the folded sheets preparatory to sewing them. These letters or 'signatures,' as they are called, have an added use as a name for each section of the book. Authors are sometimes greatly mystified when told by their publisher that he is sending them proofs of sigs. A and B of their book to pass for press; it means, of course, the proofs of the two sections containing pages 1–16 and 17–32, respectively.

Proofs are almost invariably printed on proof paper, usually some cheap paper upon which it is possible to write, and NOT upon the paper to be finally used, which may be, and often is, quite unsuited for writing. Furthermore, proofs are 'pulled up' on a hand-press merely to enable the author to check the accuracy of the typesetting, and for that purpose it would be waste of time to bother about the evenness of the printing. These two points cannot be too much emphasized; every publisher receives all too frequently the

most pathetic letters from authors, who have just received their first proofs, expressing the hope that better paper is going to be used and that more care will be taken over the quality of the printing!

The number of proofs provided varies with the printer and the instructions of the publisher. Four sets are supplied by most printers gratis, but if more are wanted, some small extra charge may be made. The publishers themselves require proofs for various purposes, e.g. (1) to check the quantity of paper to be ordered; (2) for their travellers; (3) for publicity purposes; (4) to show foreign publishers; (5) to lend to the artist, if a design is needed for the cover; (6) to look through themselves. It is usual to send the author two sets — one of them a marked set stamped 'to be returned,' the other an unmarked duplicate for the author to retain and use, if need be, for the preparation of an index. The 'marked' set has been gone through by the printer's reader, whose encyclopædic knowledge and eagle eye have saved many authors from pitfalls.

It is the duty of the printer's reader to draw attention to any doubtful points as well as actual mistakes which he observes. A question mark in the margin, which some authors seem to regard as 'an impertinence' (I quote from an author's letter), is merely an indication that the passage queried should be carefully read by the author. It may be that the grammar is a little shaky, that the meaning is not clear, that there has been some inconsistency, or that the reader thinks a slip may have been made. If the passage is found to be correct as printed, the question mark should be struck through and the 'reader' relieved thereby of further

responsibility. The query mark should not be left undealt with, and letters should not be addressed to the publisher asking why he (the publisher) questions the author's views on this or that subject. The question mark, as used by the printer's reader, is a method of drawing attention to a particular phrase or paragraph, and an inquiry as to whether it represents the author's intentions; it is not an expression of any doubt about the author's views.

Author's corrections. Before making any corrections authors should pause and count the cost. There is no escape from the fact that corrections are exceedingly expensive, additionally so now that most books are machine set and not hand set, and that there are few directions where there is so little to show for the money spent. (There is only one thing worse than making alterations in standing type, and that is correcting stereoplates; but to that we shall come later.) As corrections are charged at so much per hour for the time expended upon them, it is important for authors to know the kind of correction that is most troublesome. This last aspect of the matter deserves more attention than it usually receives. In the first place, it is well to keep steadily in mind that each letter is represented by a little piece of leaden type which can neither expand nor contract. When some words are struck out, a gap is created which must be filled somehow. If words containing an equal number of letters are substituted, the minimum of inconvenience and expense is caused; on the other hand, should nothing be substituted for what is deleted, every ensuing letter has to be moved along, either until the end of the paragraph is reached or until, thanks to additional

spacing between each word in several successive lines, the gap has been filled. This is known as 'putting the type through the stick,' as it has to be taken out of the 'forme' in which it has been made up and actually handled again by the compositor.

On a larger scale the addition or deletion of several lines may give quite undue trouble and involve the transfer of type from one page to another, unless, as already mentioned, it happens to occur at the end of a chapter, where space is available and there is in consequence a measure of elasticity. Similarly, instructions to make a fresh paragraph may involve the disturbance of many lines. Two questions, therefore, the inexperienced author should always ask himself or herself: Is the correction *really* necessary? Have I made it in a way which involves least trouble?

Printers' charges for corrections are often the subject of dispute because they are not easy to check, and certain unscrupulous firms have occasionally sought to make up in this way for 'price cutting' in their estimates. Others may have, whether by accident or design, included in their charges the cost of correcting their own errors. The remedy for these ills is threefold: First and foremost, to employ an honest printer with a reputation to lose; secondly, for authors to correct printer's errors in some distinctive way, by the use (say) of different coloured ink; thirdly, for the publisher to insist upon a correction ticket or docket for each batch of corrected proofs. Such a slip, of which the following is an example, enables the publisher to keep a much closer watch upon the expenditure being incurred.

CORRECTIONS AND ALTERATIONS

Title .....

Signature..... *Stage*.....

The Compositor's and Reader's charges on this amount to £ : :
for UNWIN BROTHERS, Ltd.

Date..... .....

It is obviously much easier to check the cost of the corrections on a few sheets than those in the whole work.

In all cases where the corrections are heavy and the author's allowance is likely to be exceeded, it is wisest to obtain an estimate of their cost *before* giving effect to them. There is then time for the author to decide to do without the corrections, to authorize them to be made, or to obtain an independent estimate of their cost; and the publisher will have the satisfaction of avoiding one very common cause for grievance amongst authors.

Imposition. Immediately the first sixteen pages are imposed, all competent printers submit a special proof for the approval of the imposition. In many cases a slip is attached of which the following is an example:

URGENT

Kindly say if the margins of this page are satisfactory.

Also, does your Binder require any special imposition to suit his Folding Machine?

Progress is delayed pending your answer to

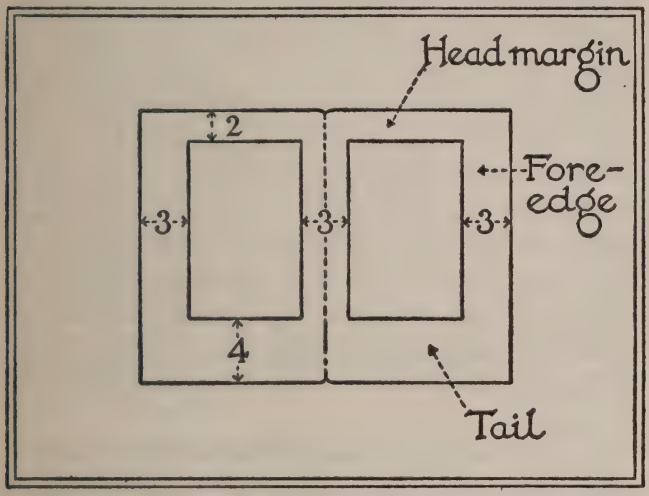
UNWIN BROTHERS, LTD.

There are two distinct questions to be answered. As has already been pointed out, the arrangement of the margins is one of the most important factors in determining the appearance of a book. If the proportions are right, the result is pleasing to the eye and the book is convenient to hold and to read. It will be found in practice that where the margins of a book are correct they are twice as broad at the bottom as they are at the top; and the outside margins and what you see of the two centre (or inside) margins will represent the mean between the top and the bottom margins. In arithmetical formula, the proportions are two, three, and four, as shown in the simple diagram opposite.

The imposition sheet sent for approval will not, however, correspond exactly with this formula, because allowance has to be made for trimming or cutting the edges in the process of binding, and for the amount of the centre margins or gutter which will be hidden out of sight when the sheets are sewn. The amount so hidden tends to increase with the thickness of the book. The trimming, or cutting of the edges (and comparatively few books nowadays are left completely uncut), will be affected by the nature of the folding, and this brings us to the second question asked by the printer.

To-day much of the folding hitherto done by hand is done by machine. The two processes are not the same, and it is, therefore, necessary for the printer to know which way the sheet is going to be folded before he can arrange the pages, i.e., impose them. Any reader who wants to understand this question of imposition will find it very easy to do

so if he will take a piece of paper and fold it three times, thus forming a 16-page section; then, without cutting the edges, number the pages one to sixteen in words. When unfolded he will be surprised to find what unexpected positions some of the pages occupy — still more is it the case with a 32-page section.



With handfolding the majority of the uncut edges, or 'bolts,' as they are technically called, appear at the top of the book, with machine-folding the bolts appear at the bottom. Handfolded sheets may thus have more trimmed from the top, whereas machine-folded sheets (to make sure of clearing the bolts) will have more cut off the bottom of the book. Though theoretically perfect, machine-folding is never in practice so accurate as handfolding.

The revision of proofs. If the author's corrections are few

and clear, there will be no need for a 'revise,' and the proofs should in that case, before their return, be marked 'press' and initialled by the author. If one section is heavily corrected, that section can be marked 'revise' and the rest 'press.'

It saves both time and expense to do without revised proofs, and in most cases they are unnecessary, except possibly for the first and last 'sigs.,' which contain the prelims and the index. The latter cannot be completed until page proofs of the whole work are available; so what technically is a 'revise' of the last 'sig.,' and of such matter as it may contain, is actually a first proof of the index.

Despite all precautions a few errors are sure to escape notice. The proportion, if the proof-reading has been skilfully done, should not be high. However irritating the mistakes, it is much better to keep a careful record of them in readiness for a second edition than to print an errata slip which nobody bothers to read, essential as it occasionally may be.

Authors often suggest sending (and sometimes even do send) proofs back direct to the printer. Except in the rare instances when the publisher has felt it expedient to arrange for this, it is one of those short cuts which prove the longest way round. The printer either sends the proofs, or writes, to the publisher before doing anything with them, as it is to the publisher he has to look for payment for any work done, and it is only from the publisher, therefore, that instructions can be accepted. Apart from that fact, it would be quite impossible for the publisher to keep a watch over the production, let alone the correction bill,

if he did not know when and whether and in what condition the proofs had been returned.

In a big publishing business, watching the proofs going to and fro between printers and authors needs the closest attention. Usually, the movements of proofs are recorded in a book specially ruled for the purpose, so that the publisher can tell at a glance the position of each sheet of any book that is being printed and make sure that there is no unnecessary delay.

But there is a further method of control to which allusion may here be made. Most book printers send their more important clients a weekly report showing the position of all 'work in progress.' From these reports the publisher can ascertain the exact stage reached by every book, whether the paper has been duly delivered, and whether, in fact, there is anything holding the work back. The 'work in progress reports' afford a most effective and necessary check, and save both publisher and printer much unnecessary correspondence.

The press work, or machining, as it is now called, for it has long since ceased to be done by hand, is the next process to be considered. Bookwork is almost entirely done on 'flat-bed' machines, i.e., the type is on a flat surface, whereas newspapers are, for the most part, printed on rotary presses, i.e., the type, or rather plates cast from the type, are on a cylindrical surface. A few cheaper books are produced by the latter process, but they need not detain us. The evenness of the printing is largely dependent upon the evenness of the surface of the type. The bed of the machine is exactly level, the composition rollers that carry the ink

are easily adjusted, but the thousands of little pieces of type may not present a true surface. The process of preparing the surface of the printing machine cylinder so that even pressure is given on every part of the 'forme' and type, together with other minor adjustments, is called 'making ready.' It is a most laborious affair if the work is conscientiously done.

It is well, however, for authors to remember that just as the rubber tyres of a motor-car suck up loose stones from the best macadam road, so the ink rollers passing over the type occasionally draw out any isolated letter which is not firmly held by the pressure of its fellows. Punctuation marks, which are very slim pieces of metal, are particularly liable to be drawn out in this way. It is thus not due to malevolence on the part of the printer, as I found one author thought, that stray commas and full stops disappear from the end of so many lines of verse. Even if they are not entirely removed by the suction of the rollers, they may sometimes be broken off.

Theoretically, if any letter gets misplaced in course of machining, a proof of the page affected is, after correction by a compositor, re-examined by the printer's reader; but, in practice, the machine-minder, wanting to get on with his job, occasionally puts the letter back where he 'thinks' it comes from. Very often he thinks right, but if he does not, there arises one of those tiresome misprints which the author complains — quite correctly — were not in the proofs he passed. The remarkable thing — and authors and publishers would do well to bear the fact in mind — is, not that errors of this kind occur, but that they happen so comparatively seldom in really good printing offices.

A more serious matter is the 'greyness' of much modern printing. The causes vary: the paper may be unduly absorbent or fluffy, or pressure may have been brought to bear upon the printer to expedite delivery, in which case he may find himself compelled to run the ink thinner to ensure its drying more rapidly. In any case it is a point which needs perpetual vigilance, because otherwise the appearance of a book may so easily be marred.

Paper. Mr. A. Dykes Spicer has already provided for those interested in the subject an authoritative book on 'The Paper Trade' (Methuen, 1907), and a brief account of the various materials used in paper-making will be found in No. 7 of 'Spalding's Quarterly,' a magazine issued by the firm of Spalding and Hodge, Ltd., who were pioneers in the making of several of the papers now most used by book publishers, and whose booklet, 'Paper Terminology,' readers will find most useful.

Hand-made papers and the best quality writing-papers are still made from cotton and linen, but both these materials, even in the form of rags, are too costly for ordinary commercial purposes, and other products of plant life have long since been substituted. The two materials now chiefly used in book papers are esparto, a coarse grass which grows wild in Spain and North Africa, and wood pulp, in the form of what is known as either chemical wood or mechanical wood, the latter being of the poorest quality.

The best antique papers, more particularly bulky 'featherweights,' are made almost exclusively of esparto, and it is on antique papers, whether 'laid' or 'wove,' that

most modern books are printed. Unfortunately, there is still a very great tendency to judge the value of a book by its bulk, and there is no paper which bulks so largely in proportion to its weight as a featherweight antique wove. Therefore, even though it may cost a little more per pound, it gives, as far as outward appearances are concerned, much the best value. If an 80-pound paper costing 4*d.* per pound will give a book of the same thickness as a 100-pound paper costing 3½*d.* per pound, the fourpenny paper is the cheaper of the two, though it is surprising how difficult some people find it to grasp that fact. On the other hand, it is often extremely fluffy and gives the printer trouble by choking up the type, covering the machine, and worse still the ink rollers, with a deposit of the loose fluff and thus seriously affecting the quality of the printing. There is therefore a tendency to substitute antique laid, which is a little firmer in texture, but has, none the less, good bulking qualities.

In cases where bulk is not required, or if line illustrations are to be printed in the text, papers with a smoother surface have to be used, such as a 'machine finish' (M.F.), which is smooth without being glossy. A compromise between the two is now made in the form of a 'satin surface' antique. For the printing of illustrations separately, a still smoother paper is usually needed, viz., 'art' or 'imitation art.' The glossiness of the art paper, which is both bad for the eyes and an abomination to the artist, is obtained by loading the paper with china clay. A degree of sharpness satisfactory for most photographic or 'half-tone' blocks is, however, often obtained on a well-rolled esparto paper, which is of a more pleasant appearance.

The various sizes in which paper is usually made have already been mentioned. The standard of quantity is the ream, which is nominally 500 sheets, but may be as few as 480 or as many as 516. Book papers are nearly always supplied in reams of 516, thus giving the printer some allowance for spoilage and ensuring that if paper for 1000 copies is ordered, not less than a thousand and possibly a few more will be forthcoming.

Calculating the quantity of paper required is apt to prove very troublesome to the uninitiated, because it is so easy to make the mistake of ordering half or double the quantity needed. Not only does the number of sheets in a book vary, but the number of sheets that a ream will give varies according to whether it is ordered in the double or quad size. Take as an example an ordinary $2.00 novel of 320 pages: for one thousand copies ten reams will be required if the paper is ordered in quad crown (30×40), twenty reams if double crown (30×20) paper is used, and only five reams if, to take advantage of the latest machinery, double quad crown (60×40) is needed. The difficulty will be lessened when the new standardized measurement of 1000 sheets is generally adopted (at present it does not apply to papers made for book publishers), but there will still remain the confusion between 'pages' and 'leaves.'

Illustrations. There are innumerable methods of reproducing illustrations, but with the more costly it is unnecessary to deal, as they are not used extensively in commercial book-production. Progress is continually being made; new processes are evolved, or old methods improved almost out of recognition. Two of the more costly pro-

cesses used in expensive books, 'photogravure' and 'collotype,' give the most satisfactory results, especially when carried out under the supervision of an expert like Mr. Emery Walker, but unfortunately cheaper and less satisfactory alternatives have nearly always to be used.

For certain classes of colour printing, the lithographic process, i.e., printing from a stone, is still adopted; but for the most part modern reproductions are made by either half-tone or line processes.

The half-tone process can be used for the reproduction of almost any type of original, but principally those in graduated tones, such as photographs, wash-drawings, paintings; it has the great drawback that the best results are dependent upon the use of glossy 'art' papers, which are so heavy to the hand. Hence the frequent necessity of printing illustrations separately from the text.

It can easily be seen if an illustration is printed from a half-tone block, either by observing the little dots in the reproduction with the naked eye, as one can do in the illustrations in a daily paper, or by looking at the reproduction through a magnifying glass, if a finer screen has been used and the dots are too close together for the eye to detect them.

Most modern coloured illustrations, if not printed lithographically, are produced by this process, in which case three blocks for the three primary colours, yellow, blue, and red, are used. Better results and finer shades are, of course, obtainable by using four or more blocks, but this adds materially to the expense. It will readily be understood that the difficulty of accurately superimposing the print-

ing of one set of blocks upon another, technically called 'registering,' automatically increases with the number of colours. It is not surprising, therefore, that it costs more to print one illustration in two colours than two illustrations separately in two different colours. In the first case a great deal more care has to be exercised than in the second. Naturally, therefore, if economy has to be studied, the number of colours used has to be reduced to the minimum. In colour printing, the order in which the colours are printed, and the shades of yellow, blue, and red used, greatly affect the results, and it is customary, therefore, for the block-maker to provide 'progressive pulls' for the printer's guidance. The block-maker sends with his block a proof pulled upon the best quality paper to show what excellent results he has obtained. These proofs are sent to the printer as a standard.

If any 'legend' or 'caption,' i.e., descriptive matter below an illustration, has to be printed, the printer pulls up a rough proof for the lettering to be checked. When this rough proof is sent to the uninitiated author to make sure that the wording is correct, it nearly always calls forth a remonstrance and an expression of hope that the illustrations are not going to look quite as bad as that! Once again, therefore, it is necessary to emphasize that such proofs are submitted only for the purpose of checking the wording. If any alterations are going to be made, it is obvious that the paper must be of a kind on which it is possible to write. Furthermore, nothing would be gained by the expenditure of time upon careful printing at that point.

The line process is a cheaper method, and where it can be

adopted is generally to be preferred. It is useless for the reproduction of photographs or wash-drawings, but is suitable for the reproduction of line drawings, diagrams, woodcuts, or very simple coloured illustrations where the colours do not intermingle.

It has always surprised me how few of the many artists who earn their livelihood by drawing for reproduction ever make any real effort to study the media through which their work is to reach the public. For instance, it is astonishing what a small proportion of the designs submitted for the jackets of novels are drawn in such a way as to be suitable for reproduction with three line blocks instead of three half-tone blocks. Not only is the line process cheaper, but it is more effective for such purposes and does not have to be printed upon glossy art paper. For this reason line illustrations can be, and generally are, printed with the text of a book; whereas half-tone illustrations, as we have seen, usually have to be printed separately on art paper unless the whole book is so printed, in which case the volume will feel like a lump of lead. (As a matter of fact, half-tone and type can be printed on calendered esparto if a screen of 133 lines is used and a good pressure.)

Wherever illustrations are printed in the text it is nearly always essential that galley proofs of the latter should be provided, as it is seldom possible to arrange for the placing of the illustrations beforehand.

The 'offset' process. There is one further method of reproduction to which reference has not yet been made and which is coming increasingly into vogue, and that is the 'offset' process. This is a form of lithography in which the

image is first printed onto a cylinder covered with india-rubber and passes from that immediately onto the paper. The principal characteristic of the process is that because of the more gentle pressure of the rubber blanket upon the paper, a much finer film of ink can be used, which in turn gives the possibility of finer, sharper printing. The method can be used for type as well as for illustrations, either 'half-tone' or 'line.' Like most processes, however, it has its limitations, one of which is that when once the work to be printed has been transferred on to zinc plates ready for machining, it is extremely difficult to alter even one letter, should a correction be found necessary. Nor is it possible to carry out that precise 'make ready' that gives sharpness to 'half-tone' prints by the letterpress method.

Block-making. Much of the colour lithographic work has always been done in Bavaria, but since the war there has also been a tendency for a good deal of block-making to be done abroad. This latter is an innovation due to the fact that the leading English blockmakers have adopted a fixed scale of charges by the square inch, from which they will not depart by a hairbreadth. No such artificial price maintenance prevails on the Continent, with the result that at the present moment block-making is being done in Holland, Belgium, and even in Vienna, that might well be done in England.

To estimate the prices of blocks, all that is needed is to calculate the number of square inches and to multiply it by the appropriate scale price, e.g.:

	Sq. inches
One illustration to be reproduced 5 in. × 4 in.	= 20
One illustration to be reproduced 5 in. × 3 in.	= 15
Total	35

so that if the scale rate were 1*s.* per inch, the cost would be 35*s.* for the two blocks. There is, however, one important point to be remembered: that, under the prevailing scale, blocks measuring less than fourteen square inches are charged as if they were fourteen square inches.

Methods of reproducing books. The cheapest method of reprinting a book is to do so from standing type. In America, comparatively few books are printed from type at all, as the custom over there is to make a set of electroplates of the type and to print from the plates. The process of electrotyping is much more frequently used in America than in England. It consists of depositing a thin sheet of copper upon a waxen mould and backing it with a softish alloy between lead and stereo to the requisite thickness. This is a more costly process than the making of stereoplates, to which we shall come in a moment.

Most printers in England allow the type to be kept standing free of charge for at any rate a month, if not three months, from the time the printing is completed, and nearly all will keep it longer on payment of a small rental. Even twenty years ago the holding of type in this way was a serious matter, because, in effect, it was locking up the printer's capital. Now that books are machine set, it is merely a question of holding up so much metal, for as soon as the type is done with it is melted down again. None the less, the amount of metal thus required in a large printing office is very substantial, and publishers are constantly faced with urgent requests for permission to break up standing type in order to release metal.

The publisher has then various courses to consider. If

it is improbable that a further edition will be called for, he will give instructions for the type to be distributed. If he feels that the point will be decided one way or the other in the immediate future, say within the next month or six weeks, he will probably agree to pay rent for the standing type (or persuade the printer, if he can, to hold it a few weeks longer gratis!). If he is certain that, although no immediate reprint is required, further editions will be wanted in years to come, he will give instructions for the type to be 'moulded,' i.e., for papier-maché impressions of the type to be made from which subsequently — when they are wanted — stereoplates can be cast.

Stereoplates are made of stereo metal, which consists largely of lead. They are thus rather soft, and it is impossible to print unlimited numbers from them. When they are likely to have specially hard wear, it is usual to have them nickel faced. If care is taken in the process, it is possible to cast two sets of plates from one set of moulds.

It is dangerous to generalize, because the cost and character of the typesetting of a book may vary so considerably, but roughly speaking, the cost of taking a set of moulds and subsequently casting a set of stereoplates from them is about three-quarters the cost of composition, assuming that the composition is fairly straightforward. There is thus no very great economy unless more than one reprint from the plates is likely. Should a second be called for, the saving is considerable.

It is so seldom, in proportion to the number of books published, that a third printing is needed, that publishers hesitate about locking up capital in the taking of moulds.

The scales are very heavily weighed down against their doing so. In the first place, as we have seen in the section on agreements, the author may want to resume the rights without making an allowance of any kind for the moulds. In the second place, the author may want to make substantial alterations in the book, in which case moulds may be rendered useless, because the corrections would have to be made in the stereoplates. When it is realized that these are solid pieces of metal of the same size as the area of a page of type and that to make alterations in them necessitates cutting out the parts affected and accurately soldering in the new matter, it will be seen that this is an undertaking to be avoided.

Fortunately for publishers the Germans have developed another alternative known as the 'Manul' process, a development of 'offset,' to which reference has been made in the section on illustrations. Being a semi-photographic method, it is only suitable for facsimile reproduction. Some alterations can, however, be made by resetting the pages affected and photographing the corrected version. It is thus no longer essential to take moulds if a facsimile reprint is wanted, and we have already seen that it affords no economy if serious alterations are contemplated throughout the work. Stereoplates will, however, continue to be used in cases where many reprints of the same book are likely to be required. A book of which stereoplates are in existence can at any time be reprinted with the utmost despatch, whereas the 'Manul' or 'Phototype' process usually involves rather more time.

It ought, perhaps, to be mentioned that British printers

charge slightly more for printing from plates than for printing from standing type, because more care is needed in the 'make ready.' This is especially the case if there are any illustrations in the text. American printers, on the other hand, prefer machining from plates, and charge extra for machining from type.

I must add one word of caution about the German process, or rather processes, as there are others besides the 'Manul,' such as the 'Anastatic.' This latter, which was the first in the field, is far from satisfactory. There are now firms in almost every country ready to reprint books by some equivalent of the 'Manul' process. Each printer uses his own pet name for it, but few of those who claim to know all about the method have as yet the requisite experience which alone ensures first-class results, though most of them can produce isolated samples of good work they have done.

Warehousing. In the happy days before the war, warehousing was a minor problem to publishers. Both printers and binders were nearly always ready to hold printed sheets free of charge and almost indefinitely. There is no doubt that the privilege was greatly abused. It is so unusual to get 'something for nothing' that few publishers realized it was a privilege until they lost it. To-day there are very strict limitations to the length of time a printer will hold stock, and immediately the prescribed period has elapsed, rent becomes payable at so much per 1000 sheets of 16 pages. However modest the charge that is fixed, it rapidly becomes formidable. (The renting of an independent warehouse is not necessarily a remedy, because the biggest item is apt to be the warehouseman's wages and not the rent.)

It will be seen, therefore, that with the exception of those rare birds, the steady sellers, the time inevitably and all too soon arrives when the cost of warehousing the surplus stock of a book exceeds the proceeds of the sales. Publishers thus have a greater incentive than heretofore to dispose of unsaleable books. It was bad enough to have capital locked up and unfruitful; it is now worse, because in addition it is a source of expense.

This aspect of the matter indirectly concerns authors, many of whom appear to think publishers excessively perverse if they show any anxiety to 'remainder' a book, or to pulp surplus sheet stock which it will never pay to bind, even though several years have elapsed since the work was first published and it has entirely ceased to sell. This question will be considered more fully in Chapter VI in the section on Remaindering.

The form in which books are stored varies. They may be in flat sheets as originally printed and baled up by the printers, or the sheets may have been folded and collated by the binder, and packed in parcels of from (say) twenty to a hundred copies in readiness for binding. Even if the binding has been completed the books have to be carefully packed and labelled just the same, or they would soon become dusty and unsaleable.

Looking out a single copy of a book that is stored in flat sheets may be a lengthy business, if each sheet is in a separate bale. The warehouseman has not only to move each of these heavy packages from its rack, but to unpack and repack each of them and subsequently restore them whence they came. For this reason it is usually an ex-

pensive matter for a publisher to supply single copies in sheets, unless he has had some packed up in readiness for a possible demand in that form, or happens to be giving a binding order which will necessitate the bales being opened.

Binding. The two kinds of binding which chiefly concern the book publisher are cloth binding and paper binding, if in those two categories are included the many compromises that lie between them. Vellum and leather bindings may be needed for special editions and special occasions, but their use as 'publishers' bindings' is too restricted to detain us.

Some printers have fully equipped binding plant, many are competent to tackle paper binding, but most binding is carried out by independent bookbinding factories in and around London and, to a lesser extent, Edinburgh. It may be convenient to *print* books at some distance from the centre of distribution, but it is seldom wise to bind them too far away, because if there is an unexpected demand for the book, every hour's delay in the delivery of further supplies may be a serious matter. Although the larger the number bound at once the cheaper the price of the binding, it is seldom wise to bind up the whole of an edition at the outset. The cost of printing five hundred copies more than are needed is little more than the value of the additional paper needed, whereas the cost of binding in excess of one's requirements would be a substantial item. Most publishers, therefore, restrict their binding orders to their immediate needs, and this presupposes the proximity of the binder if more copies are wanted in a hurry, and, equally important, the closest possible watch from day to day upon the movement of the stock.

The efficiency of a publishing business may often be tested by the care with which this side of the work is supervised. Booksellers would not have cause to complain that so many of the books they needed were 'binding,' if the principals of publishing houses more frequently called for an explanation why their books were being so 'answered.' During the war period it was inevitable, but under normal conditions the trouble is usually due to lack of forethought, carelessness, or want of co-ordination between the relevant departments, though there are, of course, unexpected occasions when the best regulated houses will be caught napping.

Lettering. As far as outward appearance goes, the most important part of the binding is the lettering. Here the second-rate publisher and the amateur almost invariably give themselves away. Good lettering can seldom be obtained without incurring the trouble and expense of specially cutting it in brass to suit the exact thickness of the book. The chief trouble is that you must wait until you know definitely the thickness before having the lettering cut (guessing will not do, because a quarter of an inch too much or too little will mar the effect); the expense amounts to about 5*d.* or a trifle more per letter. It is sometimes possible to make use of the stationer's dummy copy (sent as a sample of the paper and to show its bulk), but it is more usual to get the printer to send a 'thickness' copy made up from the actual paper received, immediately it is quite certain how many pages the book will make. Alternatively, if there is no great urgency, an advance copy taken from the actual printed sheets is used.

Many publishers attend to their own letterings and deliver them to the binders; others leave it to the latter. In either case it is important to see that a good model is followed. There is neither necessity nor excuse for bad lettering on a book. It should be legible, beautiful, and in keeping with the book. On the Continent, particularly in Germany, great store seems to be set upon variety. In this there seems to me no point. There is ample room for variation in the style of the binding, the colour of the cloth, etc., without artificially introducing it in the lettering.

The question of whether the lettering is to be in gold or in ink is largely governed by the price. Good plain ink is always to be preferred to any imitation gilt (some of the substitutes used during the war were deplorable). The main thing to remember is that gilt is most effective on dark-coloured cloths and ink on light ones, but even to this rule there are exceptions, as coloured inks can often be used on dark cloths with good results.

Book cloths. Many authors have pronounced likes and dislikes about the colour and grain of the cloth to be used on their books. As was explained in an earlier chapter, most publishers will be ready to meet their wishes (unless the volume is intended for a series in uniform binding), if the author raises the matter at the appropriate time, say immediately the proofs are passed for press, and if he is specific in his requirements and submits a book bound in the approved cloth as a sample. Should a book issued by the same publisher be selected, it will be sufficient to name it. There will be some obvious limitations to what the publisher can do in the matter of the quality of the cloth —

buckram, for instance, costs considerably more than an art vellum. Where no particular cloth is prescribed, the binder will probably submit half a dozen sample binding cases made from different cloths of which he happens to have stock and leave the publisher to make his selection. Cloths of an honest 'cloth' texture are preferable to those 'grained' to simulate watered silk, crocodile skins, etc. One could wish makers of binding cloths were more imaginative in producing pure colours.

If the sheets reach the binders imposed for machine-folding, they will probably all be folded and collated forthwith, whether all are to be bound or not. The folding has already been described; the collating is the gathering together of the folded sections of the book in the right order. Until this has been completed, the binder does not know and cannot report to the publisher how many 'perfect,' i.e., complete, books the sheets will yield.

Imperfect books are mostly due to mistakes made in this process, either a section is missed altogether, or two of the same signature are inserted, or a wrong one substituted. Despite careful checking, slips of this kind are bound to occur, and in view of the speed with which the work is done, it is astonishing that the proportion of 'imperfect' books is not larger. At this point it is well to place on record that all binders rectify imperfections without charge and without demur, and will often, in addition, refund the cost of posting back the imperfect copy. The best plan is to send it to the publishers, when they will usually forthwith exchange it for a perfect one if it is otherwise in good condition 'as new.' If, however, it has been inscribed or marked

in such a way as to render it unsaleable, the actual copy will have to go back to the binders to be put right, and this will probably mean a week or two's delay, particularly in the busy season of the year.

When the work of folding and collating has been completed, the binder reports to the publisher that he has so many perfect copies. If a good printer and binder have been employed, this represents the full number of sheets advised, or possibly a few over. When there are shortages, the binder sends an 'imperfection' note showing exactly what sheets are missing. Should the trouble be due to the default of the printer, it will then be for the publisher to take the appropriate action to secure the missing signatures.

The 'cases' in which books are bound are produced nowadays by machine, and the binder requires to know, therefore, before he starts just how many are needed. As with the printing machine it is the 'making ready' that occupies so much time, so with a case-making machine it is the preliminary adjustment that is the trouble. After the machine is once started the process is more or less mechanical. This is not the place to enter into the technicalities of bookbinding: those interested in them would be well advised to study the writings of Mr. Cedric Chivers, of Bath, who has devoted much time and attention to improving the durability of binding for library purposes.

Jackets. When the binding is completed and the books have been pressed and given time to dry, they have still to be inserted in dustcovers or 'jackets,' without which most modern books are considered incomplete. School-books and cheaper productions are covered with glassine or

'waste,' i.e., surplus sheets of some other book, but for most new books special jackets are printed. In the case of a novel they may be in colours, and may cost, as we have seen in an earlier chapter, as much as £25.

Certain firms specialize in the printing of jackets, and so are able to keep prices down. The usual practice, therefore, is for a publisher to employ such a firm and to deliver the jackets ready printed to the binders.

Here again there is apt to be trouble and delay over 'thickness,' and much as the publisher would like to push ahead with this part of the work, he usually cannot do so until a 'thickness copy' is available and it is possible to ensure that the jacket will fit.

Much care is taken by many firms in the 'lay out,' the arrangement of the type, etc., of their jackets. It is the jacket that will first meet the customer's eye, and the extent to which this fact is realized may be seen by comparing a good specimen of a modern jacket with anything of the kind produced in the past.

Unfortunately, a picture specially designed for its 'poster-like' effect and technically admirable for use on the jacket may not please the author of the book for which it was drawn. What then is to happen? Is the author to be condemned to have his book wrapped in a jacket the very sight of which he abhors? Can the publisher be expected to continue commissioning first-rate artists until a design acceptable to the author is forth-coming? It is a very real difficulty, despite the fact that the jacket is not a permanent part of the book, but only a dustcover that will soon be discarded. To invite the author to nominate the artist to

be employed may be a remedy worse than the ill it is intended to cure. Designing jackets requires a certain technique and an experience for drawing for reproduction that comparatively few artists happen to possess.

The difficulty is usually evaded (or postponed) by presenting the author with a *fait accompli* in the form of the finished book on the day of publication, when it is too late to go back. Obviously some compromise ought to be evolved. The author should at any rate be given the opportunity of providing or paying for an alternative design, though when there is haste even that may be a counsel of perfection.

It is a question whether expensive picture jackets for novels have not become a fetish. The realization that, although they may have cost as much as four-pence each, many, if not most, of them will immediately be discarded without having served any purpose, should make publishers pause. On all their formal orders Messrs. Boots, for example, state that they do not require jackets on copies supplied to them for their library. Messrs. W. H. Smith & Son, on the other hand, definitely favour jackets, and let it be known that the absence of a picture jacket will reduce their first order. For the Colonial trade and for sale as 'remainders,' picture jackets are an asset; for copies intended for public libraries they are useless.

So we are faced with the position that large sums of money are daily spent upon picture jackets that half the potential purchasers of novels do not want. It may thus cost as much as 8*d.* per book to provide jackets for just those buyers who want them. Are they worth this expense?

The question is easier to ask than to answer. Some novels lend themselves to pictorial decoration of this kind; many do not. It might be possible to confine picture jackets only to those books, such as the novels of Nat Gould and ——, for which they are really suited. But unless publishers agree between themselves to limit their picture jackets in this way, I fear that the waste of money will continue. Presumably there is a large public which demands them, though I often wonder how many books are sold on the strength of their picture jacket.

Alternative bindings. We have thus far referred solely to ordinary cloth bindings with gilt or ink letterings. There are various alternatives, but they mostly have one drawback, viz., that they are unsuited to the requirements of the circulating libraries, and so long as people insist on borrowing books instead of buying them, this will remain an important consideration.

A cloth binding with a carefully printed label, and binding produced in every way as a cloth binding, but with some strong and artistic paper substituted for the cloth in the making of the case, are both attractive. For small and cheaper books, many developments of paper bindings are now used; e.g., the paper cover is pasted on and turned over a 'stiffener,' or, cheaper still, merely turned over the end paper. Any method which gives the paper binding an added feeling of solidity seems to help to make it acceptable to the British book-buyer, accustomed to have all his books in cloth.

Paper binding. This is perhaps an appropriate place to point out to the various people who periodically write to

the Press advocating paper-bound books on the Continental model, that they are mistaken in their estimate of the extent to which this would affect the price. Whether paper bindings are desirable or not, the fact remains that, owing to the use of modern machine binding, the difference between paper and cloth binding is not so very substantial. In both cases the sheets have to be folded, collated, and sewn. The saving is in the provision and fixing of a case. On an average the maximum gain in substituting paper for cloth would be between 4*d.* and 5*d.*, often not as much. This would justify a reduction of not exceeding a shilling in the published price. Now, any publisher who has made the experiment (and some of us have done it over and over again to our cost) has found that even if a greater difference than 1*s.*, say 1*s.* 6*d.*, be made, the cloth binding will be chosen in more than nine cases out of ten. On the Continent, where paper binding has hitherto been the rule, there is an increasing tendency (particularly in Germany) to use the publishers' cloth bindings.

I cannot help recalling one particular case where an author made it a condition that we should publish his book in paper covers at 3*s.* We agreed to do so. The booksellers gave it a bad reception, despite its exceptional cheapness. Several of the better firms offered to order it largely if we would supply them with some bound copies at 4*s.* 6*d.* The author consented to oblige these particular customers; with the ultimate result that we had to rebind many of the paper copies to sell them, and that, though the book has been available in both styles ever since, we have sold and still sell about five at 4*s.* 6*d.* in cloth to one at 3*s.* in paper.

But these remarks would *not* apply to special editions wanted in connection with adult school study circles, N.C.L.C. classes, etc., where even a sixpence difference in the price would count.

Binding for America. Reference has been made elsewhere to the sale of 'special editions' to the U.S.A., and it may be well to explain the binder's part in their production in the event of the edition being supplied bound and from the existing stock of sheets. The first thing is to have fresh title-pages printed bearing the American publisher's imprint on the face and the essential words 'Made in Great Britain' or 'Printed in Great Britain' on the back — essential, because without this the books would not pass the American customs. The binder then cuts away the original titles (as well as any advertisements) and substitutes these 'cancel titles' bearing the American publisher's imprint, inserts the American publisher's name on the binding when making the cases, and with that the 'special edition' is achieved.

The time occupied. We have now examined in turn all the more usual processes employed in the making of a book, but no mention has been made of the important question of the length of time occupied. It is a point upon which it is especially dangerous to generalize, because no two books are alike — not only are some long and some short, but some are straightforward, others the reverse: one book may not contain a footnote, another may be smothered in them and have Greek and Arabic letters into the bargain. But for the benefit of authors, who are under the impression

that books are printed, like newspapers, in a matter of hours, it may be well to give some general indications of the time that may be required for the production of an ordinary book of 90,000 words in length:

Casting off, etc.	say 1 week
Composition	say 3 weeks
Correcting proofs	say 1 week
Machining	say 3 weeks
Binding	say 2 weeks
Time lost in transit of paper and printed sheets	say 1 week
Contingencies	say 1 week
	12 weeks

It will thus be seen that assuming the *utmost* promptitude on the part of the author in passing the first proofs and the absence of necessity for revised proofs, a clear three months, if not more, is usually needed for the production of a book.

Even this, as will be seen in a subsequent chapter, does not include publication.

Authors should remember that the best workmanship requires time, and that it is seldom wise, therefore, to bring any undue pressure to bear to expedite the printing and binding.

CHAPTER VI

THE ACTUAL SELLING

It is one thing to produce a book, quite another to sell it, though some authors one meets regard the two as synonymous. I have often had occasion to tell authors that advance copies of their book will be ready on such and such a day, and am still surprised at the frequency with which they reply, 'Then you will be publishing the book on that date.' Authors who are especially insistent upon publishers exercising the greatest possible activity in pushing their books seem often to grudge the time necessary for the process, and are apt to be annoyed when told that not until the book is produced does the chief work of publishing begin. Kliemann starts his interesting work, 'Die Werbung für Buch,'[1] which I believe is the only book in any language devoted solely to book publicity, with a little poem by Felix Dahn, which I venture to paraphrase as follows:

> To write books is easy, it requires only pen and ink and the ever-patient paper. To print books is a little more difficult, because genius so often rejoices in illegible handwriting. To read books is more difficult still, because of the tendency to go to sleep. But the most difficult task of all that a mortal man can embark upon is to sell a book.

Dahn was attacking the tendency to borrow books instead of buying them, but the quotation is none the less an indication of both the difficulty and the importance of the selling end of a publisher's business.

[1] Stuttgart: C. E. Poeschel Verlag.

Publicity in all its various forms is discussed in a separate chapter. Here it is proposed to deal with the relationship between the publisher and his various customers, the booksellers and circulating libraries at home and abroad. In recent times emphasis has rightly been laid upon the importance of a closer and more personal relationship between publishers and booksellers; an aspect of the matter which it would be difficult to overemphasize. It has been my good fortune at one time or another to call upon the majority of the leading booksellers in Great Britain and Ireland, and practically all those of any importance in all the dominions (except Newfoundland and Western Canada), as well as those in other distant countries such as Japan, and on the Continent from Copenhagen to Budapest and Paris. It involved the devotion of over two years to the study of bookselling conditions abroad, but it can truthfully be said in more senses than one that a publisher cannot spend his time more profitably than in the company of booksellers. Unfortunately, the fact remains that when once a publisher assumes the responsibility for the running of his own business, the opportunities of personal contact are materially reduced, and in practice that contact has to be largely maintained through travellers and by correspondence.

The daily orders. Before dealing with the activities of the various travellers a publisher employs, it may be well to give some indication of the usual way in which the day-to-day orders are executed. For the most part they come from the booksellers in the form of postcards, or at printed-matter rate in open envelopes, and they are the part of the

post first dealt with in most publishing offices. In many cases they are separated and sorted out before the other letters are opened, because there is not a moment to lose if the books are to be invoiced, looked out, and packed in time for delivery to the various carriers to whom the publisher is instructed by the booksellers to send them. The best-run offices pride themselves upon the rapidity and accuracy with which this part of their work is done.

Large orders call for different action, as most publishers keep their main supplies either at their bookbinders or at a warehouse situated in some less expensive quarter than their own offices. Such orders may be dealt with in a number of ways. Instructions may be given to the binders over the telephone, or by delivery note, to send in the requisite copies, which are then packed and dispatched exactly as a smaller order would be, though, of course, more elaborate packing or rather, baling is necessary, and possibly a packing case. Alternatively, and this is a method in constant use if the customer is in London, or employs an agent in London to attend to his packing and shipping for him, the binders are instructed to make delivery direct.

Export orders are usually much more troublesome than home orders, in that they practically all involve three or more copies of each invoice as well as, in some cases, elaborate declarations for customs purposes, and for orders of over $100 from America a consular certificate. To the exceptional difficulties with which the publisher is confronted by the action of certain of the dominions, and still more of America, we shall turn later. Most London retail booksellers send to the publisher's trade counter for their urgent

supplies, thus saving a day. Whilst at the publisher's counter, the bookseller's collector calls over the titles of all those books he wants but of which he has been unable to trace the publisher's name. It is highly skilled work attending to the busy trade counter of a leading publisher. Hundreds of titles are called over daily, and the publisher's assistant has to be able to spot any of his firm's books. This presupposes an exact knowledge on the assistant's part of the titles of all the books in the particular publisher's catalogue. But even that is insufficient, because much imagination is required to identify some of the titles given. It would be a comparatively simple matter were the titles given correctly, but the occasions for error are rather frequent. In the first place, the customer may not give the bookseller the correct title. He may, for instance, refer to it under the title of an article about the book; he may not even know the author's name. The bookseller's assistant who takes down the order may not do so correctly, and the collector may find the writing indecipherable and make a mistake in copying it into his book. Even when correctly written down, some names prove difficult to pronounce; but in most cases the title is detected, the book is supplied, and all goes well. Occasionally there is failure, but on the whole the work is done astonishingly well, though probably not so well as before the war. It does not follow that because a book is ordered a publisher is in a position to supply it. It may be that the book is out of print, that it is out of stock, or not yet published. For each of these eventualities there is a definite and correct reply, mostly in the form of initials, viz., O/P = out of print; RP = reprinting; O/S =

out of stock; Bdg = binding; R.S. = ready shortly; N.O. = not out; N.K. = not known, etc. A country bookseller ordering three books of which one is available, another out of print, and the third ready shortly, will receive an invoice for the book that can be supplied, with a note at the foot of it that such and such a book is O/P and the other R.S., and he has all the information he needs to explain the position to his customer.

Orders for books that are temporarily out of stock, binding, or reprinting, are carefully recorded by the publisher in what is known as a 'due book.' Should there be no great lapse of time between the receipt of the order and the date when it is possible to execute it, the publisher will probably supply it without more ado, with a note of the order date or order number on the invoice. If, on the other hand, some time has elapsed, it is customary to send the bookseller a postcard advising him that the book is now available and either asking permission to execute the order, or stating that the order will be executed unless the bookseller advises to the contrary. If the publisher's business is efficiently run, an eagle eye will be kept upon the due book by the trade manager, if not by one of the principals of the firm, because it is one of the most effective methods of ensuring that orders are not being unreasonably held up. To save time and minimize effort, many publishers have printed cards and printed form letters giving such replies as have constantly to be made, thus saving the writing of innumerable cards and letters. This form of economy has not been as fully worked out in some publishing offices as it might well be, with the result that there is still much un-

necessary repetitive clerical labour. Theoretically, publishers do not do any business direct with the public,[1] but few of them decline to execute an order which is accompanied by the full published price plus postage, and there would seem to be no adequate reason why they should, particularly as such orders come mostly from out-of-the-way parts where there is no local bookseller. But most publishers, I imagine, refer any inquiries from potential customers to the nearest local bookseller, though curiously enough, in my experience, their action in so doing is not always appreciated by the prospective buyer. Personally, I am all in favour of encouraging the real bookseller wherever I find him — there are by no means too many of them in England — but I have never quite understood why booksellers who reserve the right to act as publishers whenever it suits them to do so should resent a publisher acting as a bookseller when unsolicited business comes his way. There are certain books with the distribution of which booksellers can, because of the circumstances of the case, be of little assistance. There are others with which, because of political or other prejudice, they refuse to be of assistance. There was one particular case where a thousand copies of a book were sold at the full published price across the publisher's counter before any bookseller in the vicinity could be convinced that there was any demand for the book. I am never likely to forget the description of how one of the thousand purchasers arrived at closing time in a state of exhaustion, and explained that he had spent the

[1] In America nearly all of the larger houses have active 'mail order' departments dealing directly with the ultimate consumer. — F. G.

whole afternoon tramping from bookshop to bookshop in a fruitless endeavour to get the book. Not many buyers will have that degree of perseverance, and when a publisher finds the public clamouring for a book which booksellers are refusing to stock, it seems unreasonable to expect him to decline to supply the public direct. Fortunately, however, there is a marked change observable in retail bookselling, and the number of firms who take the line that because they do not approve of the views expressed in a particular book nobody else will (or should), is on the decrease.

We have thus far considered those orders which reach the publisher without the intervention of a traveller, and they are for the most part for books already published, because it is the practice of all publishers to canvass for orders for new books before publication, so that nearly all orders for unpublished books, or 'subscription orders,' [1] as they are called, reach the publisher through his travellers. The territory covered by the travellers may be conveniently divided into three groups, viz., towns, country, overseas.

The town traveller is in the happy position that practically all his customers, including all the biggest buyers, are within a fairly small area. He is thus able to keep in daily touch with his principals and to show to all his customers an actual copy of each new book to be published by his firm. This process of showing new books round to the trade

[1] In this country these are called 'advance orders.' What the author has to say of the town travellers applies to the travellers who have special charge of the trade in New York, Chicago, Boston, and Philadelphia. — F. G.

is termed 'subscribing' a book. To call upon all the wholesale and retail booksellers in London, as well as the many export houses, takes from a week to a fortnight, according to the thoroughness with which the work is done and the number of customers visited. In the case of several of the bigger firms it is necessary to leave for inspection at their offices copies of the books which are being subscribed. It is thus essential for the town traveller to have several advance copies of each book if he is to do his work efficiently. Some of his customers will look through his samples more or less at any time and give their orders there and then. Most of them have their definite hours when they will see travellers, and woe to the man who attempts to disturb them at any other time.

The task that confronts the buyer of a big firm like W. H. Smith & Son, which handles every conceivable type of publication, would require divine inspiration to be correctly done. It is very easy for the publisher to criticize. He has seen the reader's report on his manuscript; he has had opportunity after opportunity of getting to know everything about his books, and it is his own fault if he does not know. But the buyer is daily confronted with scores of books he has never seen, and to each of which he cannot devote more than the most fleeting attention. Many buyers would, I am sure, be thankful if the publishers would settle the numbers to be purchased and accept the responsibility for their mistakes. And where confidence is established either between the publisher and the buyer or the publisher's representative and the buyer, this is to some extent what happens. It would occur a great deal more frequently if

fewer publishers, and for that matter authors, were under the delusion that it is good business to land the buyer with the maximum stock he can be persuaded to purchase, regardless of whether there is any hope of his being able to dispose of it or not. This is most emphatically not sound business for the publisher, and unless it is the last book he intends writing, it is still less sound business for the author. 'Once bit twice shy' holds good of booksellers as of other people, and the worse they are bitten in connection with the work of any particular author, the more shy they will be about handling his next book.

The best representative is the man who, having interested his customer in the books that are being offered to him, persuades him to take the maximum he can safely buy, and no more. Most town and country travellers are salaried employees of the firms they represent, but some in addition receive a commission on all orders actually obtained by them and accepted and executed by their firms.

Most publishers have a definite publication day, say every Thursday[1] or every alternate Thursday, in which case the traveller has so to arrange his work as to ensure that all his orders are handed over before that particular day each week or each fortnight, as it is essential that all orders should be executed simultaneously. To ensure that all booksellers should be able to supply copies on the day of publication, country orders have to be dispatched at least twenty-four hours ahead of London orders. Any failure to exercise care about simultaneous supply would

[1] Friday is generally the publication day of Houghton Mifflin Company. — F. G.

have the effect of giving one customer preference over another, and has to be avoided at any cost.[1]

Publication note. In some firms, my own amongst the number, the principle of the time-table is carried still further, and a printed form headed 'Publication Note' is issued to all departments about three weeks before publication, giving the dates when advance copies are to be ready, when the main supplies will come in, when the review copies are to go out, and the first copies left at Simpkin Marshall & Co., Ltd. (the leading wholesalers), and elsewhere. If this plan is adopted, great care has to be taken by the production and other departments concerned that there is no failure on their part to keep to the schedule dates, as any departure from them in the case of even one out of the several books to be published would throw the whole machinery out of gear. The publication note serves a good many purposes other than those indicated. There is, in fact, no department which is not in some way concerned with it. The cashier, for instance, on receipt of his copy of the publication note, automatically sees whether there are any payments due to authors on publication. The advertisement manager discusses with his principals the amount to be allocated for advertising each particular book on the note, and the trade department at once starts to invoice the orders accumulated in the due book. The trade counter know what books to answer R.S. (ready shortly), and are able in addition to give the exact date of publication more than a fortnight in advance of publication, and

[1] Magazine publishers take much more pains over this than many book publishers.

so on throughout the whole house, including the principals, who write advising the authors of the date that has been fixed, and consider what special steps each particular book calls for. With certain firms, the whole work of publishing is purely mechanical. The books might be sausages for all the individual attention that is given to them; but the wise publisher realizes there is an individuality behind each book, just as the wise schoolmaster realizes the different individuality of every boy in his school. It is surprising how much can be done for most books by personal treatment of this kind. Usually it can only be done by the publisher himself, and often means much time and thought as well as endless correspondence. How much can be accomplished by the writing of individual letters is astonishing. Naturally, imagination plays a big part. The publisher has to think not only who ought to be interested, but whom he, the publisher, is in a position to interest in the book. If he has made personal contact with many booksellers, he will remember that this, that, or the other one was particularly interested in this or that subject or this or that author, and can make use of such knowledge. It may be that he can persuade some organization to help make the book known. The only limits to what is possible are the limitations of the publisher's own time. Some authors are unwise enough to take up so much of it that they leave him none in which to get on with the pushing of their books.

I may here add that authors who are told by junior assistants in bookshops that their book is 'not known' must not immediately throw the blame upon the unoffend-

ing publisher. They may take it for granted, if the bookshop is in London, that a copy of their book has been actually offered before publication to the bookseller, and, in any case, whether in London or not, the bookseller himself probably knows all about it, even if his assistant does not.

Trade terms. We cannot leave our town traveller without making some reference to the all-important question of terms. Wherever publishers and booksellers meet, whether in person or by deputy, terms are sure to be among the questions discussed. It is the custom, and from both the publishers' and authors' point of view a good custom, to allow the bookseller a better discount on 'subscription orders,' i.e., on orders placed before publication. These better discounts are known as 'subscription terms.' Booksellers ordering copies of a book at that stage are, to a limited extent, sharing the publisher's risk in that they are sinking their capital in an untried venture. This is a proper and equitable ground for special consideration, and nearly all publishers grant specially favourable subscription terms. There is unfortunately a tendency to use all concessions given, and very properly given, on subscription, as a lever for securing the same terms after subscription. All the arguments for granting repeat terms as favourable as subscription terms sound so very plausible. Why should the poor bookseller be penalized and granted less favourable terms when he wants subsequently to buy more copies of a given book, because he finds that there is a substantial demand for it? Why is a bookseller left with so little inducement to go on selling an already published

book, etc.? The answer to all these most excellent arguments is just this: that were a publisher to grant the same terms after subscription as before subscription, the bookseller would inevitably and naturally tend to wait and see whether the book was going to 'catch on' before committing himself, and would thus, in a very large proportion of cases, refrain from buying on subscription. If, therefore, a publisher were unwise enough to make a general practice of conceding his subscription terms after subscription, he would soon find himself confronted with the necessity of granting some new concession on subscription orders, and the whole trouble would begin again. Quite regardless, therefore, of what the particular discount should be, it is clear that the bookseller should be given, and is entitled to receive, some special inducement for sharing the risk of publication by ordering books before they are published.[1] On the question of what these discounts ought to be, feeling is very strong. In the chapter dealing with the price of books I have emphasized what seems to me the most important point of all, and the one that is consistently overlooked, viz., that there can be no increase in discounts without a corresponding increase in published prices. The bookseller who in one breath tells you that books are too dear, and that he must have a larger share of the proceeds, is crying for the moon. Just because I emphasized in the 'Nation' and elsewhere the essential relation of discounts to published prices, it was assumed by many booksellers

[1] In the United States special discounts apply to quantities rather than to date of purchase. If the bookseller believes a new book is safe for a quantity purchase either prior to or subsequent to publication, he benefits by a better rate. — F. G.

that I begrudged them a living wage. I begrudge the real booksellers nothing; I regret that there are not more of them. But as a friend of booksellers, as one who is furthermore dependent in some measure upon them for his livelihood, I feel bound to call out when I see disaster looming ahead. The claim made by many booksellers (but not officially by their association) to receive a *minimum* discount of 33 ⅓ per cent[1] *under all circumstances* is not, in my judgment, a tenable one, and if pursued with success would inevitably lead to an unwarranted increase in published prices, a consequent reduction in sales, and very probably the breakdown of the 'net book agreement,' an agreement which booksellers rightly regard as their sheet-anchor and to which reference will be made later. There may be certain classes of books which call for exceptionally favourable terms, but it is no good shutting our eyes to the fact that there is a large proportion of books which should be effectively distributed and sold direct to the public at less expense than a minimum 33⅓ per cent would involve. As I have pointed out when examining the question of discount in relation to price, a minimum 33⅓ per cent discount means in practice that the cost of distribution will be round about 50 per cent of the published price. A minimum 33⅓ per cent to the bookseller is a maximum 66⅔ per cent to the publisher. The publisher's average receipts will be much less by the time the special inducement on subscription orders, the extra discount to wholesalers and

[1] In the United States a minimum discount of 33⅓ per cent is general. Retail prices are somewhat higher and the market for general books far greater. The bookseller, however, is urgently maintaining that 40 per cent is necessary. — F. G.

exporters, as well as the traveller's commission are deducted. So long as the retail bookseller is pressing for a *maximum* 33⅓ per cent, he is on much safer ground, and this, I think, nearly all the best booksellers have now come to realize. They are as a whole better off to-day than they have ever been, largely, no doubt, because the war abolished the non-net book in general literature. (Could any one say that truthfully about publishers?) One of the leading booksellers, for whose judgment I have the greatest respect, wrote protesting at the statement about terms in my article on 'The Price of Books' in the 'Nation' (it is slightly modified in the form in which it appears in Chapter III), and I therefore asked him how he thought it should be worded. His draft was as follows:

> When 'net' books were first introduced, the usual discount was 16⅔ per cent with 5 per cent at settlement, roughly 21 per cent in all, and if one could use seven or thirteen copies, an additional 4 per cent or 8 per cent for the odd copy. This gave at least a modest profit, and was therefore an improvement on the conditions prevailing under the discount system, which generally gave no profit and barely covered working expenses. To-day the latter have increased for the bookseller as for the publisher, and unless the former receives at least 25 per cent, he is practically without profit. Even where he is merely executing an order he asks for 25 per cent, or rather more, and if he sinks his capital in keeping stock and tries to effect sales, he expects and requires 33⅓ per cent.

This is particularly instructive, as, although it perhaps puts the retail booksellers' case a little too generously, it supports my main contention, namely, that the discount should be a maximum, not a minimum, 33⅓ per cent. In

practice, discounts will vary to some slight extent with the kind of book. With some publications, booksellers can be much more helpful than with others, and their remuneration, if it is to be on a durable footing, is bound to have some relation to the service rendered. Again, the risk of loss is greater in certain cases than in others. A standard work, whether it be on philosophy or economics, even if a ready sale is not effected, can always be sold at something nearly approaching what the bookseller has paid for it. On the other hand, a $2.00 novel, or a volume of verse, if left on the bookseller's hands, may not yield a fraction of the bookseller's initial outlay. For practical purposes, these varying terms fluctuate between a minimum of 20 per cent (i.e., 16⅔ less 5 per cent on settlement) and a maximum of 33⅓ per cent.[1] There is a growing tendency to grant a minimum of 25 per cent after subscription, at any rate, where two or more copies are ordered, and there is likewise a tendency to grant the maximum of 33⅓ per cent on subscription, provided not less than three copies are ordered. The claim to increased terms on single copies, which is very insistent, calls for special examination. It is quite true that orders for single copies of already published books are sometimes 'for stock,' and such orders may be and are from time to time included with those given to the traveller and executed on subscription terms. But the suggestion that any considerable proportion of such orders for single copies of published books are for stock will not bear examination. It is a matter which some of us have

[1] Instead of 33⅓ per cent substitute 40 per cent and you have the American situation. — F. G.

had opportunities of testing over and over again. Let us say, my firm has been confronted with the fact that some good book on a special subject has ceased to sell and that we have sent out a circular letter, drawing attention to the book, to very carefully selected names and addresses of people we knew from our records were likely to be interested. It would be quite simple to get the bulk of such business direct if we chose to do so, but it is our practice to make it clear in all circulars and prospectuses that the order can be handed to any bookseller, and if an order form is attached the word 'bookseller' is introduced at the appropriate place. About three days after such circularization the orders begin to reach us from all parts of the country, a very large proportion from firms who have never stocked a single copy of one of our more serious books or lifted a little finger to help us to sell them. Will the suggestion that such a firm ought to receive more than twenty per cent, or at the outside twenty-five per cent, for merely passing on an order, stand examination? Most business men would welcome with open arms any business that they had done nothing to obtain; which involved no risk, very little trouble, and covered their full overhead expenses. Should booksellers expect more? Of course, if such an order is passed on by a real bookseller who is not content with merely dealing out cheap fiction, there is a great deal to be said for the contention that he is entitled to special consideration in recognition, not of the particular service, but of what he is doing in general to promote the sale of better books.

Taking it as a whole, trade terms have materially im-

proved, and it is now to increased sales rather than to increased discounts that booksellers should look for increased profits, and this they are very wisely doing by giving their whole-hearted support to the work of the National Book Council, to which reference is made in the chapter on Publicity.

Educational textbooks have purposely been excluded from the preceding discussion of terms. They are mostly ordered in large numbers. They are published at lower prices which only permit of a lower range of discounts, usually fluctuating between 16⅔ per cent and 25 per cent. Any increase in the discount on educational books would automatically involve an increase in the published prices. Any one taking the trouble to estimate the cost of their production will find that the publisher's margin of profit is of the narrowest. The reason why educational books are a profitable line is that the orders tend to be for large quantities and the turnover is often much more substantial than for ordinary publications. Furthermore, if once a particular book is at all generally adopted for class use, it sells itself with very little further effort. Happy is the publisher who has many such books.

Circulating libraries are amongst the biggest buyers upon whom the town traveller calls, and here we enter upon a very thorny subject. There are some publishers who defend the circulating libraries; some who would like to see them abolished root and branch. In so far as they promptly and efficiently supply the public with the particular books for which the public asks, it is difficult to see that serious objection can reasonably be taken to them;

but unfortunately the conditions here laid down are applicable only to what is known as 'guaranteed subscriptions,' and, although I have no statistics before me, I imagine that guaranteed subscribers form a tiny minority. There is no certainty that what other subscribers ask for they will be given. On the contrary, in practice, such subscribers will at the best have to put up with such books on their list as are not in active demand, but more frequently with inferior substitutes of which the library has surplus stocks. The present system tends to assist the circulation of indifferent and bad books, and to retard the circulation of really good books, especially those by writers who have not yet established reputations.[1] The public has been led to expect that for some decimal fraction of a penny per day the loan of all the new books can be secured, and, having contracted to pay a circulating library less than they willingly pay for a daily newspaper, they either delude themselves or are deluded into thinking that all the latest books are at their disposal and that there is not the slightest necessity ever to buy one. There is one circulating library that makes a boast of the extent to which it can force its subscribers to take what is given them, which means, in that particular case, what the library can buy cheapest. The circulation of books published by many of the best firms is deliberately restricted because such books cost a penny or twopence per copy more than indifferent stuff published by second-rate firms or good books published by firms so dependent upon circulating libraries as to be putty in their hands. The library I have particularly

[1] No such situation exists over here. — Γ. G.

in mind actually sent for one of its subscribers, a young author, and warned him that the circulation of his novel would be deliberately restricted because he had been unwise enough to publish it through one of the most respected firms of publishers in London. What the library hoped to gain by such action is not clear. It certainly lost one subscriber, because, when all the facts were explained to the author, he unhesitatingly supported his publisher. The remedy for all this is not necessarily the abolition of circulating libraries (the circulating-library habit has become far too engrained in England for that), but the educating of the public to see that they get the books they ask for and not substitutes. The subscriber who will uncomplainingly put up with whatever his circulating library is pleased to give him would be the first to protest if his grocer gave him margarine when he had asked for butter. When more people give to the things of the mind a fraction of the thought that they do to food and clothing, they will not be satisfied with anything less than a guaranteed library service. Lest this should be construed as an attack upon the administration of circulating libraries, I think it is fair to add that one or two of the largest are extraordinarily well run, and that neither I personally, nor my firm, have any complaint to make about them. I would go a step farther, and say that what they accomplish for the most insignificant sum is remarkable; but all libraries are not so run, and in any case I feel strongly that any form of subscription other than a guaranteed subscription is pernicious, and in the long run detrimental to the well-being of the book craft as a whole. Let us hope that at no

very distant date people will be at any rate as insistent upon getting from the circulating library the book they want as they are upon getting the right brand of cigarettes from their tobacconist or a particular kind of soap from their grocer.

The country traveller cannot of necessity keep in such close touch with his firm or even with his customers. Whether Scotland, Ireland, and Wales are included in the territory or the ground is divided up between two, three, or more representatives, it is not possible for the country traveller to call upon country booksellers as frequently as the London traveller calls upon his customers. Some of the smaller places will be visited only twice a year, and larger towns four or at most six times per year. It is thus necessary for the traveller to carry a much wider range of samples, and to have with him particulars of all forthcoming books likely to be published before his next visit. Of some recent books he will have with him complete copies, but of many he will have what are known as travellers' samples. No bookseller could be expected or would want to read through the entire book while the traveller was there, but he does need to know what the book is about and what its appearance will be. Both these points are fully met by the traveller's sample, which usually consists of the first thirty-two pages of the book bound up in the correct binding, save that the shelf back, which shows the thickness of the book, appears on the back cover of the sample. Half a dozen such samples may thus be packed into the space occupied by a complete book. Of forthcoming books the traveller may have uncorrected proofs of the opening

sections, or, if the contract has only just been signed, a brief descriptive paragraph from the announcement list.[1] Naturally, the more he has to show the bookseller the better it is for the latter, and the more likely the traveller is to obtain orders. It is customary for the publisher to advise the country bookseller that his representative will be calling upon him on such and such a day, and if the representative is in the habit of collecting payment of accounts, a statement showing the amount due will be enclosed with the advice note. Before the war it was very usual for goods ordered on one journey to be paid for at the traveller's next visit, but this system is no longer as universal as it was, and there is an increasing tendency in the trade to pay accounts quarterly, if not monthly.

In the country, and still more in London, the quantities bought are very largely dependent upon the record of the previous book by the same author, with the result that, however bad a book is, it is almost certain to have a good reception at the hands of the trade if it follows a success, or, however good the book, it is likely to have a bad reception if it follows a failure. The predatory type of publisher relies upon this fact when bidding for a new book by an author some fellow publisher has launched with special success. Where there is no record to go upon, the buying tends to be ultra-cautious, and in view of the large number of indifferent books published, this is hardly surprising,

[1] In the United States it is now customary for the publisher to prepare his publicity campaigns on important books so far in advance that the travellers can take out dummies, advertisements, copy for circulars, and circular letters, etc., in order to enlist the coöperation of the dealer. — F. G.

though it is extraordinarily annoying at times to the publisher when he finds, despite his representatives' eloquence, a really first-rate piece of work 'turned down' or bought in insufficient quantities by the booksellers.

There is a growing tendency amongst booksellers, as well as amongst the public, to be influenced by the publisher's imprint. Certain firms have the reputation of publishing the best books on particular subjects. When they come along with new books on these subjects they are considered certain to be good, because the publishers have a reputation to lose, whereas if a fiction publisher suddenly comes along with a book, say, on psychoanalysis, it is probably because his travellers have told him that books on psychoanalysis are selling, and not because a particularly good book on the subject has come his way. It is almost certain, in fact, to be a book rejected by the specialist publisher. A few booksellers specialize, and their buying is thus greatly simplified.

When we turn to the *representatives in the dominions and overseas*, different conditions prevail. A few firms have actual branch houses in India, Canada, and elsewhere, but for the most part publishers employ representatives living in the different dominions who work on a purely commission basis; that is to say, that the publisher appoints some one, resident, for instance, in Cape Town, to act as his South African representative and to call on all the South African booksellers on his behalf, and in return agrees to pay a commission, usually of ten per cent, on all orders obtained by the representative. Such a representative is perfectly independent and may act for several publishers as

well as for firms in associated trades. The farther the representative is away from his principals, the more important it is to provide him with advance information about forthcoming publications. If, for instance, you do not write to your New Zealand representative about new publications more than three months before their issue, you have not given him time to secure and send you any orders in readiness for execution on the day of publication, because it may take as much as six weeks for your letters to reach New Zealand and six weeks for the replies to come. From overseas, therefore, comes the insistent call for advance information. Home booksellers, on the other hand, object to the announcement of books too far ahead of the date of publication. Each firm has its own particular method of getting over this difficulty.

The practice of my own firm is to put into type, in the form which it will ultimately take in our list, a descriptive paragraph of every book within a matter of hours of the contract being signed, regardless of when the book will be published. A sufficient number of proofs are then printed for all the many representatives overseas and for those distant customers who need this information. In this way, by merely pasting these slips into the latest edition of our announcement list, the overseas representatives have at all times the maximum information about forthcoming books which we are in a position to give them. Uncorrected proofs of each book follow as soon as practicable, and various other steps are taken of a more personal nature into which it is unnecessary to go. The trade papers from time to time issue special export and announcement

numbers, and these are, of course, carefully looked through by overseas customers. In such issues it is customary to advertise books much farther ahead of the publication date than would otherwise be done.

Colonial editions. Of most novels and of some other books cheap colonial editions are published. The theory is that people overseas *buy* new novels, whereas we at home only borrow them; that at 7*s.* 6*d.* (or rather at 10*s.*, the increased price at which a 7*s.* 6*d.* book would probably be sold in some of the dominions) the sale would be negligible, whereas at a lower figure it might well be substantial. Colonial editions of novels are usually supplied to the colonial trade at from 3*s.* to 3*s.* 6*d.* in cloth (or at about sixpence less if supplied in paper binding), and are retailed at varying prices in the different dominions. They yield little direct profit to any one save the bookseller, but enable the publisher to print rather larger editions, which is, of course, an economy.

Their sale is not on the increase because, alas! the circulating library-habit has spread to the dominions, and bookbuyers overseas are all too prone (despite their privileged position) to wait for yet cheaper editions of the novels to appear.

Each of the overseas markets presents some particular problem.

In Canada there is the proximity of the U.S.A., the different currency, and the tendency of literary agents to throw in Canada with the United States market as if it were an annex of the States, regardless of the fact that there are many independent Canadian publishers ready

and willing to purchase Canadian editions from British publishers and to exploit the Canadian market on the British publisher's behalf.

In Australia and New Zealand there is the question of 'marketing,' i.e., the granting of the monopoly of the sale in Australia and / or New Zealand to one retail bookseller. In practice, this means the sale of more copies than would otherwise be disposed of, but — and it is a very big but — the copies have to be supplied at an exceptionally cut price, and the granting of a monopoly to one customer is apt to cause offence to many, if not all, the others. A point that has to be remembered is that firms taking markets in this way will only select a book here and there from a publisher's list. The publisher will still be confronted with the marketing of the rest of his list, and the problem is not made easier by the fact that one or two of his best-sellers are excluded.

With the object of the plea recently made by Australian and New Zealand booksellers, that they should receive a fifty per cent discount, it is easy to sympathize, because every publisher would, I imagine, prefer to have his books sold at the published price, instead of at an enhanced price, in distant parts, just as at home. But a moment's thought will make it clear that any general undertaking to supply books at half price would automatically involve an increase in published prices, to cover the increased discount.

In other words, the publisher would have to charge more for his books (and thereby prejudice their sale) in his principal market (Great Britain) in order to suit the require-

ments of a section of his overseas market (Australia and New Zealand). In individual instances it may be a practicable proposal (if published prices are fixed accordingly), but as a general principle it is obviously unsound.

The Continental market presents a different problem. To the organization of the German book trade, which is the most perfect in the world, a special chapter is devoted. Leipzig may rightly claim to be the chief European book centre for all except the Latin countries; but it must not be inferred from this that considerable business is not done by Scandinavian and Dutch booksellers direct with London and Paris. All three Scandinavian countries, as well as Holland, are in proportion to their population excellent buyers of English books, but the Scandinavian market has not yet been as extensively developed as it might be, largely because of the expense of so doing. A publisher, wishing to send a representative to Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, is faced with the necessity of obtaining a 'commercial traveller's licence' from each country (the fee in Denmark is no less than 400 Kr.), and in consequence it simply is not worth while making such a trip. If the Scandinavian Governments really regret, as they say they do, that English books are not more actively pushed in their countries, the remedy is in their own hands. I, for one, should have visited both Norway and Sweden many times, but for their system of licences. As it is, I have never done so.

Dutch buyers are, of course, in very close touch with the London market, and some of them do a substantial business with Java and the other Dutch colonies.

When one refers to the French market in relation to

English books one means Paris, because all the other French centres put together do not absorb as many English books as Paris, where the sale is largely in the hands of three firms, British, American, and French respectively. All three carry substantial stocks of English books, particularly of the lighter kind, and do a very considerable business. Certain of the other French booksellers attend to the university and scholastic requirements.

The booksellers in the German-speaking part of Switzerland are all in close touch with Leipzig; those in Geneva and the French part, on the other hand, look largely to Paris and London. In Geneva there are many excellent firms, one in particular run by an American lady.

The demand for English books in Italy is fairly substantial, and the same might be said about the credit which many of the Italian booksellers require. As has been remarked often, it is easier to sell books in Italy than to secure payment for them. The demand for English books in Spain and Portugal is, on the other hand, negligible.

Soviet Russia is a fairly consistent buyer of books on economic subjects through its official London buying agents. A certain amount of business with the Balkan countries is done direct, but for the most part they turn to Leipzig or Paris for their supplies.

The actual organization of the Dutch and, to a lesser extent, the French book trade has been largely based on Leipzig experience.

The Scandinavian book trade is highly organized. In Sweden, distribution is effected for the most part through a Stockholm company, owned by the booksellers them-

selves, which daily receives the orders from the country booksellers and distributes them to the publishers, and subsequently receives and dispatches all the parcels to the booksellers without any expense to the publishers.

All accounts and money, however, are, as a rule, sent by the booksellers direct to the publishers. Much of the business is done 'on sale or return' with a yearly settlement. The question of credit is dealt with most effectively. In 1911 the booksellers formed a kind of mutual insurance society to guarantee the publishers against bad debts, the premium payable by the bookseller being calculated on his turnover. The publishers gave a substantial donation and agreed that no new booksellers should be granted credit who were not accepted as members of the society. Swedish booksellers are thus in effect licensed, because, if a locality is being well served and there is no indication that another bookshop is needed, credit is withheld from the newcomer.

In Norway, similarly, the booksellers have some say in the granting of new permits, and in Denmark an attempt has been made to copy the Swedish guarantee society. Both in Norway and Denmark the trade is organized as a whole, whereas in Sweden the publishers and booksellers have separate associations.

U.S.A.[1] Few British publishers, unless, of course, they have American branches, make any attempt to do business direct with American retail booksellers; it is largely done through American publishers. In many cases the book is

[1] In the following paragraphs the reader may read 'American' for 'British' except in the case of customs duties. There are no duties on books imported into the British Isles. — F. G.

independently printed and copyrighted in the States, in which case the English publisher has nothing to do with the American market, except to collect the royalties, if he has effected the sale of the rights. Alternatively, the British publisher may have supplied the American publisher with a duplicate set of plates from which to print an American edition. This does not secure copyright, but is a perfectly safe procedure in the case of any book which is unlikely to be pirated, but which will be wanted in sufficient quantities, or at such a specially cheap price, as to make the importation of sheets an impracticable arrangement. The majority of English books published in the U.S.A. are sold to American publishers in the form of an edition bearing the American publisher's imprint. The edition may be as few as a hundred copies or as many as two thousand. The average number, however, varies between two hundred and fifty and seven hundred and fifty. The editions are sometimes supplied in flat sheets, sometimes in folded or sewn sheets. Until recently they were frequently supplied bound, with the American publisher's imprint on the binding. The form in which they are supplied tends to vary with the ever-changing American customs regulations. Not so very many years ago the duty was as high as twenty-five per cent; it was then assessed upon the actual amount paid for the copies by the American publisher. But in due course there came along a Government pledged to tariff reduction. The duty was reduced to fifteen per cent, but an artificial method of assessment was adopted which had the effect of increasing instead of decreasing the amount of duty payable. The American customs author-

ities now disregard the price paid for bound books, but base their assessment upon what they regard as the ordinary wholesale price in the country of origin, which, failing very precise evidence to the contrary, they put at two thirds of the English published price.

The maximum price for sheets sold to an American publisher is one third of the English published price, but for large quantities this price is cut. Occasionally, a very low price is accepted and a royalty paid separately. One third of the price sounds very little, particularly when it includes a royalty to the author, but it is usually as much as it is possible for an American publisher to pay. Those who have any doubts about this should calculate the actual cost for themselves, and preferably the cost of an edition supplied bound, where the price would be one third plus binding. First there is the cost of the packing-case and consular fee; then there is the freight — a very substantial item, little less, in fact, than the cost of posting the copies would amount to. Then fifteen per cent duty, based upon the artificial assessment of two thirds of the published price, must be added. This would leave the American publisher actually out of pocket (allowing nothing for advertising) by the time he had granted American booksellers the thirty-five or forty per cent discount they are accustomed to receive, unless the American publisher fixed the American price at considerably more than the dollar equivalent of the English published price. There is a definite limit to the amount of increase that it is possible to charge without making the price prohibitive and without making the book compare unfavourably in value with

books produced in America. It is the limitation of the extent to which the American publisher can increase the English price that limits the amount it is possible to pay for the sheets. Many of the editions are purchased by American publishers visiting London before the books are produced. Sooner or later, most English books of importance get published in America in some form.

Books not so published in America are bought in single copies on behalf of American libraries and others by one or two big firms of exporters. The total quantity so ordered of any one book is seldom substantial. The only case in my recollection where the number was really large was that of a book which, solely owing to political prejudice, no American publisher could be persuaded to take.

The remainder market. All publishers presumably try to gauge their requirements as accurately as possible when giving printing orders for books. Some are much more successful in doing so than others. There are firms that are conservative and very cautious in deciding the number to print, whereas there are others, as we have seen in an earlier chapter, that are reckless. It does not always follow that a book has been a failure because it eventually reaches the remainder market, although this is nearly always presumed. It may mean that the book has been a success, has gone through three or four editions, and has done so well that the publisher orders too many when reprinting for the fourth or fifth time. Sales have a way of dropping off suddenly, and often at the most inconvenient moment, when a substantial reprint has been completed. If a publisher has printed conservatively and gauged his require-

ments accurately, the stock of the book is eventually sold on the ordinary trade terms, and the book is then answered 'Out of print.' But with many books there comes a stage, whether it be sooner or later, when sales at the original price cease while there is still some stock on hand. If the number is small, it presents no urgent problem, but if the number is considerable the publisher is compelled to consider the best means of disposing of the stock. As we have seen in the chapter on Production, the pressure upon the publisher to deal with surplus stocks is much greater than it was.

Whether his contracts give him power to 'remainder' or not, the publisher who is in friendly touch with his authors would want to consult them on such a point if the particular author in question is readily accessible and has not, as so often proves to be the case when he is most urgently wanted, changed his address without notifying his publisher. Some firms have a special file for the many letters addressed to authors and returned by the Post Office marked 'Gone away; no address.' It is quite natural that when an author's book has ceased to sell he should lose interest in it and its publisher, but it is, to say the least, a little surprising when such an author turns up a year or two later (sometimes after having changed his address two or three times without intimation) and complains bitterly that he has not heard from his publishers. In the majority of cases where the author is consulted, he has no suggestion to make regarding the disposal of the stock, and the problem is left for the publisher to face. There are several courses he may take.

The first and important question is whether the stock is bound or unbound, because the difficulty may be met, or rather partially postponed, by pulping the unbound stock, if it is clear that it will never pay to bind it; this reduces the stock on hand to more manageable proportions, and may preclude the necessity of taking any further action. Flat sheets can be used as packing material. Folded and collated sheets, on the other hand, are useless except for pulping. It may be a book for which there is a market at a lower price. Unless, however, it has been a success at the higher price, it is seldom wise to attempt a reissue at a lower one, although authors often seem to think this course more desirable, or perhaps less *infra dig.*

The reissue of the same stock at a reduced price usually merely postpones the difficulty and makes the stock much more difficult to sell subsequently through the second-hand booksellers, and the reason for this is clear. To market the reissue at the reduced published price, the publisher has to turn to precisely those same channels, i.e., the 'new' booksellers, through which the book has ceased to sell. The reissue is therefore not likely to be purchased at all freely; there are no reviews to help to sell it, and there is no margin for extensive advertising. On the other hand, the sale of the stock either to a wholesale remainder buyer, or direct by the publishers to the second-hand booksellers (through whom most remainders are finally sold), results in the book being offered to the public at the same price at which it was proposed to reissue it, but through different channels, i.e., the second-hand book trade — with the added inducement that the buyer is apparently securing a bargain. It does

not need a draper to tell us that it is easier to sell an article apparently reduced in price from thirty to fifteen shillings than to sell the same article as if it were no bargain at its proper price of fifteen shillings. The attraction of the remainder buyer's catalogue is that it contains high-priced articles offered at low prices. In fixing the price that he can ask, the remainder buyer has to consider the published price, because the greater the difference between the original published price and the price which he is asking, the bigger the bargain he appears to be offering. The effect, therefore, of the reissue of surplus stock at lower published prices is to depress its value when the time comes (as it almost certainly will come) to sell it through the second-hand trade, because the amount then offered will be based upon the lower published price, not the original one.

Why there should be such a stigma attached to a book being remaindered is not clear, because it merely means the sale of the book through different channels and to a different, but none the less very discriminating, public — the buyers of second-hand books. The reputation of some books has actually been assisted, if not made, by remaindering them. In fact, the remaindering of part of the stock of any book with intrinsic merits will stimulate a demand for it. This is so widely recognized that many publishers deliberately keep back a certain number of copies of any book they are remaindering, knowing full well that as soon as the surplus has been absorbed, and resold by the second-hand booksellers, a fresh demand for the book will arise.

But remainder buyers are extremely fastidious. It is with difficulty that they can be persuaded to purchase at

any reasonable price a book that is not obviously what they would term a 'plum.' The remainder buyer, when all is said and done, is merely an intermediary between the publisher and the second-hand bookseller, and many publishers therefore canvass the second-hand trade direct and cut out the middleman. This has advantages as well as disadvantages; a higher price is secured, but the process may be a lengthy one, and some of the stock may eventually be still left on hand. Even so, if the publisher has the right organization, and cares to take the large amount of trouble involved, it will in most cases pay him better to do his own remaindering, even though he has to pulp the ultimate residue. Actually there is a still greater art in selling remainders than in selling new books. Sometimes yet more imagination is required. Quite unexpected markets may be discovered or created for special books, and the customer may not necessarily be connected with the book trade. It may, for instance, be an organization or society interested in some question touched upon in the book.

Whichever alternative be adopted, if the number is large it is often wise to pulp part of the stock at the outset, thereby greatly easing the problem of disposing of what is left, because the remainder buyer naturally takes into consideration the total number of copies that have to be absorbed when placing his order or fixing his price. In America they are much more drastic in dealing with remainders, and usually prefer to pulp the stock or let it go at a nominal price rather than bother much about it. And there is a great deal to be said for that point of view, because the amounts eventually realized are often very trifling.

One important point must not be overlooked and that is the sort of unwritten understanding with booksellers that allowance should be made on any stock still on their hands if the book is remaindered in less than two years of first publication, or if they have recently purchased the stock on the ordinary terms. The President of the Associated Booksellers recently made a plea for the abolition of any time-limit; that is to say, a plea for allowances irrespective of the time that had elapsed. But for this there does not seem to be any adequate justification, and from the publisher's point of view it is essential that there should come a time when he can wind up the affairs of any particular book and know that his liabilities in connection with it are at an end. Even as matters stand, the publisher is often in the position of having to give allowances on copies on which the full royalty has been paid, without any hope of recovering the royalty; this may mean that he is worse off than if he had given the book away. The two years' limit seems to be a wise compromise. It has been adopted and is definitely binding in Germany, and I am sure it would be a good thing if it were still more definitely adhered to in Great Britain.

The Net Book Agreement. Reference has already been made to the 'Net Book Agreement,' and it ought therefore to be explained that it came into being as a remedy [1]

[1] Practically the same situation exists in the United States, though here the net book system is based upon a gentleman's agreement. The maintenance of resale prices is the first object of the active and efficient American Booksellers' Association. Its other aims are the standardization of discounts, the successful operation of the Clearing-House Plan, the education of the trade in accounting and salesmanship; all leading to the wider and more efficient distribution of books. — F. G.

for 'underselling' — a practice which was steadily undermining the book trade. Any one interested in the history of the inception of the agreement will find it in Sir Frederick Macmillan's little volume.[1] Endless difficulties had to be overcome, and it is to the persistence of a publisher and a small minority of booksellers that the trade owes this beneficent reform, which protects it from undercutting and ensures that a book published at a net price shall be sold at that price and no more and no less.

At first, discount booksellers opposed the innovation; few believed in it, but these persevered; to-day all booksellers regard it as indispensable and are as jealous as publishers about its maintenance. Most publishers now have wording printed on their invoices to the following effect:

> These books are supplied on the understanding that they will not be sold to the public at less than net prices.

One of the questions frequently put by my own firm to any one applying for trade terms is: 'Have you signed the Net Book Agreement?'

Whether a particular firm or organization should be allowed trade terms is sometimes a source of difficulty. Circulating libraries are treated in this respect exactly as if they were booksellers. Public libraries (in Great Britain), on the other hand, are not allowed any discount, and some of the leading librarians bitterly resent it. It is a very vexed question, and owing to the heat even the most tentative discussion of the problem engenders, it is barely

[1] *The Net Book Agreement, 1899.* MacLehose, 1924.

safe to mention that the point has ever arisen, though only recently the question was formally considered by the Publishers' Association, which decided against the libraries. The booksellers no doubt have a strong case *if* (as some of them maintain) library orders involve as much, if not more, work than other orders. Colonel Mitchell, Secretary of the Carnegie Corporation, who has voiced the librarians' case, points out that the argument in favour of the granting of special terms to public libraries is based upon the simple economic principle embodied in the homely phrase 'a reduction on taking a quantity.'

In the course of his statement he writes:

> Public libraries should not, and I believe do not, claim as much discount as is allowed to the retail bookseller. They do not rank with the distributing trader. But it is equally, if not more, unreasonable to treat them as though they were individual persons buying a book or a few books at a time, whose needs are very difficult to estimate. They may fairly claim to constitute a quite definite intermediate class.
>
> The real issue, therefore, is this: Is the obvious difference between the public library and the individual book-buyer sufficient to justify favourable terms; if so, what amount of rebate can reasonably and economically be allowed?
>
> There is surely no impropriety in, or economic objection to, regarding these libraries [spending from £8100 down to £500 per annum on books] as being on an entirely different financial plane from individual buyers.
>
> It is true that they buy through different channels; that they buy separately, not coöperatively; that relatively few buy many copies of any one book.... But it is surely impossible to contend that these big buyers do not constitute an element of security for the trade, and as such possess a claim for preferential treatment....

In America and Canada there is a compromise. The larger public libraries are allowed a discount, but not the full discount. In Germany, a library spending not less than £500 per annum on new books is in practice allowed about 7½ per cent.

Turning aside from libraries, this same question of whether trade terms should be granted arises in many directions, and the answer given by publishers and booksellers would not necessarily be the same. The natural tendency of publishers is to widen the channels of distribution, whereas booksellers would equally naturally prefer to narrow them. Should a firm of wholesale opticians supplying everything connected with eyes and devoting several pages of their catalogue to technical books on the subject be granted trade terms? Booksellers would *like* to say 'no' — even if they did not. Publishers would unhesitatingly say 'yes,' and the publishers would be right, because they would thereby be securing publicity and effecting sales which they would not and could not obtain if they said 'no.' Again, take the question of religious bodies, societies, or other organizations interested in propagating some particular point of view; the only effect of refusing them trade terms *on the limited class of book* in which they are interested would be to compel them to do their own publishing, because they are sometimes in a position to sell more copies than the entire book trade put together. A point apt to be overlooked is that sales can be effected at the moment when a person's interest is aroused which could not be secured even one hour later. It is thus possible to sell the book of the words of a play to a person in a theatre who

would not dream of buying it when he got outside. Similarly with political literature sold at a political meeting. That one sympathizes with the desire that business should be effected by and through a bookseller need not blind one to the fact that sometimes it would not be done at all were it not done on the spot and at the time the interest was awakened. Fortunately, there is a growing tendency for booksellers to coöperate to secure extra business of the kinds indicated, and so long as it *is* secured no one will be better pleased than publishers that it should be handled by booksellers. The view that a publisher ought to let golden opportunities slip if he cannot persuade a bookseller to take advantage of them is not, I think, very widely held.

Special editions. In this connection it is necessary to touch upon the question of 'special editions' supplied to and sold by various societies and organizations. It cannot be pretended that they are welcomed by the trade (why, indeed, should they be?); but most intelligent booksellers recognize their inevitability, if not their usefulness, and realize that they provide an 'extra' market which would not otherwise be tapped. These 'special editions' are usually bound in cheaper style, whether it be in paper covers or limp cloth, and are often printed on cheaper paper. They are distributed by the organization or society in question, and in fairness to booksellers the condition is made (if it is not made, booksellers have every right to complain) that the sale shall be rigidly restricted to their members.

In the long run this kind of business benefits the book

trade, because it helps to create and to encourage a new class of book-buyer.

It would be beyond the scope of this work to treat of the development for bookselling, for which all the best booksellers would readily admit that there is still ample room. Personally I believe there is an increasing opening for the bookseller who will specialize — I do not suggest that he need necessarily give up his general connection, but merely that he should so develop some one field as to become the recognized expert upon it. He would then be in a much more effective position to undertake circularization and the distribution of books on approval.

But I cannot resist the temptation of mentioning another method of selling books in which I have long been interested, and which will, I hope, be tried at no distant date — THE CARAVAN BOOKSHOP. There are large sections of the rural population in Great Britain out of reach of any bookshop. If people cannot visit a bookshop, the remedy is to take the bookshop to them. Many small towns and villages, which could not support a bookseller, would form a profitable field for a peripatetic bookshop visiting them for a day or two every month or every quarter.

At first, such a caravan bookshop would find practical handbooks such as Walter's 'The Home Doctor' or 'How to Make and Mend' the most saleable, but by degrees it would prove possible to carry a wider assortment. Local coöperation in making the venture known could easily be secured, and popular lectures about books arranged to synchronize with the visit of the caravan bookshop, thus

making it a kind of missionary for the promotion of book-reading.

Success or failure would largely depend upon the enthusiasm and personality of the man or woman who had the courage to embark upon the venture. It is the old story of finding the right man; but what more delightful occupation could be found by any book-lover who, for reasons of health, wanted to lead an outdoor life?

Many will dismiss the idea as visionary, but something similar has already proved practicable in connection with rural libraries for the *loan* of books, and there would seem to be no insuperable difficulty about arranging it for the *sale* of books. In any case, the experiment is worth trying, and, if carried out coöperatively, should not be a very costly one to make.

The most effective method would probably be for a group of publishers to run the caravan bookshop as a co-operative undertaking, working in close touch with the local booksellers' associations, or for the district booksellers' association to do it themselves. The aim in either of these cases would be to concentrate on breaking new ground and to put every new customer in touch with the nearest bookseller from whom supplies could be obtained between the caravan's visits.

Is this Utopian? I think not.

But to return to existing methods of distribution, it would be unjust to finish this chapter without paying a tribute to the increasing number of real booksellers who, like oases in the desert, brighten the publishers' path.

Let us hope that one such bookseller may feel en-

couraged by the issue of this book to write a companion volume, 'The Truth about Bookselling.'[1]

[1] In the summers of 1919 and 1920 the Women's Industrial Union of Boston, through its Bookshop for Boys and Girls, with the backing of a group of American publishers, made the experiment of sending a motor caravan, equipped as a bookshop, throughout the country districts and summer resorts of New England. The enterprise was not a financial success and the supporting publishers lost heart after two seasons. It is possible that greater perseverance would have brought a different result. In any event, valuable educational work was done. In the summer of 1926 several adventures in this field, undertaken by enterprising young women, achieved a modest success. — F. G.

CHAPTER VII

BOOK DISTRIBUTION IN GERMANY[1]

I. The History of the Organization

One hundred years ago there was founded in Leipzig what is to-day the most complete organization for book distribution which exists anywhere in the world. It is doubtful whether those three enterprising booksellers, Horvath of Potsdam, Campe from Nuremberg, and Voight from Ilmenau, knew how wisely and how well they were building when they laid down the foundation stone by coöperating to lease and establish a definite place where the yearly settlement of the 'on sale or return' business could be concluded. At first it was at Richter's coffee-house; later in the lecture-room of the Faculty of Divinity, where from that time onward all the booksellers visiting the Leipzig Booksellers' Fair met to settle their accounts. The founders having provided both the accommodation and the necessary furniture and thus started 'Die Börse' (the Exchange or Bourse), as it is called, treated it as the property of the whole book trade. (It was not till 1836 that they had their own building, and the present palatial premises occupying a large quadrangle and housing many allied associations date from 1888.)

All booksellers prepared to abide by the regulations and

[1] A large part of this chapter was given as an address to the Society of Bookmen, and was subsequently reprinted in the *Publishers' Weekly and Publishers' Circular*.

to adhere to the recognized customs of the trade were entitled to membership; and from the start the regulations provided that the Börsenverein should represent and support to the best of its power all sections of the book trade. From the outset it was intended to be, and was also in fact, an active organization to promote the interests of the book trade as a whole.

A Zentralstelle or headquarters was established, where all important trade questions could be discussed, and, in particular, the problem that most troubled the publishers and booksellers of that period, viz., the lack of adequate copyright protection for literary property.

It is both interesting and encouraging to note that Leipzig gained its preëminence as a book centre some fifty years before this time, partly because of the vigour with which it discountenanced unauthorized reprints. As far back as 1773, both the sale and distribution of 'pirated' editions at Leipzig Fair were definitely forbidden. Publishers of new books, therefore, felt more confidence in coming to Leipzig than to its then great competitor, Frankfurt. But the decision of the North German booksellers some few years before to refrain from attending Frankfurt Fair had already turned the scale, and although more new books are published in Berlin than in Leipzig to-day, Leipzig is still the centre of the book trade.

From its small beginnings with a membership of but one hundred and eight, the Börsenverein made steady progress, and to-day there are about five thousand members. Development followed development. Arrangements had soon to be made to enable publishers from other parts to carry

stocks in Leipzig. Business between the Fairs became increasingly important, and from this arose the need for commissioners or agents to attend to such business, at first for the publishers, but subsequently for the booksellers as well. The custom of the trade to make all deliveries 'free Leipzig'[1] accentuated the importance of these commissioners, and to-day all non-resident members (as well as a few resident firms), whether publishers or booksellers, employ one. The custom also had another effect. It resulted in Leipzig becoming a centre for book production as well as book distribution.

The Börsenverein soon found it necessary to have a trade paper of its own. In 1835 the 'Börsenblatt für den Deutschen Buchhandel' was founded, and since 1867 has appeared daily. In addition to official announcements and much bibliographical information, it includes advertisements of all the new books, and printed order forms, thus enabling both the Börsenverein and the publishers to keep in daily touch with the booksellers, and the booksellers to place orders with the minimum of effort and delay.

Another more recent move was the taking over of the publication of the 'Literarisches Zentralblatt,' a most useful organ which combines some of the merits of 'The Times Literary Supplement' with an official list of books of the fortnight (it appears twice monthly).

Then there is an official address book, which gives brief particulars of every firm connected with the German book

[1] This is a survival of the days when the booksellers actually took their books to Leipzig to exchange and brought their stock back in person.

trade, over thirteen thousand in number. It is a perfect miracle of compression, and shows at a glance when a firm was founded, what kind of business it does, who are the partners, what commissioners it employs, and, if a publishing firm, whether it carries complete stocks at Leipzig, etc.

There are also other interesting publications in book form, e.g., a complete history of German bookselling and a manual for the instructions of booksellers.

But to enumerate all the activities that have grown out of the small beginnings of a hundred years ago — the technical schools, the technical library, the innumerable organizations of one kind and another connected with the trade, all housed in their own magnificent Buchhändlerhaus, would take me beyond the scope of this chapter.[1] Those who want further information can get it from the official 'Satzung des Börsenvereins' and from the excellent article by Rechtsanwalt Dr. M. A. Hess in the 'Jahrbuch Sachsens,' 1925, entitled, 'Die Weltwirtschaftliche Bedeutung Leipzigs als Zentrale des Deutschen Buchhandels.' Dr. Hess is the managing director of the Börsenverein, and it is to his writings and to his colleague, Prof. Dr. Menz, I am indebted for many of the historical facts set forth above.

It would, however, be unfair to close this brief account of the history of the Börsenverein without some reference to the obligation undertaken in 1913 to preserve one copy of each new book published in Germany, just as the Brit-

[1] The unofficial 'Summer Schools' for young booksellers are a most interesting recent development.

ish Museum does over here, or the Congressional Library at Washington. In other words, the book trade now does voluntarily in Germany what the State does in Great Britain and the United States. This collection, known as 'Die Deutsche Bucherei,' already contains over half a million volumes, and is in the best sense a national institution; it should not be confused with the central libraries of certain individual States like Bavaria, which still retain the right to claim a further free copy of any books published within their borders.

The Börsenverein as an organization has become a complicated mechanism, and like, let us say, a monotype machine, is a great deal easier to observe at work than to describe with lucidity to any one who has not seen it in actual operation. But it represents the greatest achievement in book distribution, and as such deserves more careful study in the English-speaking world than it has received from all but the few, such as the late William Heinemann, who pointed out as far back as thirty years ago how much there was to learn from Leipzig, even in the mere mechanics of book distribution. France and Holland have long since realized that fact, and have acted upon the knowledge acquired; and America has now made the plunge and founded a Booksellers' Clearing House in New York. England, on the other hand, still prefers to rely almost exclusively upon individual effort, forgetful of the fact that the best can only be achieved by coöperation.

In Germany, book-trade organization began by embracing the whole book trade. Separate associations for separate interests came later. In England and America,

organization has proceeded on the reverse lines, and we are still waiting for an English equivalent of the Börsenverein der Deutschen Buchhändler which shall represent all, and which will vigorously and continuously promote the well-being of those engaged in the best of all occupations, the distribution of books. The time has surely come for a wider conception of our functions and obligations and a closer coöperation between all those connected in any way with book production and distribution. There are far more things that unite than divide the book trade; and, as several booksellers have very wisely remarked, the differences will be found to be relatively insignificant when seen in a truer perspective.

II. The Clearing-House System

To describe the actual functioning of such a complicated mechanism as the German book-trade organization is no easy task. Perhaps the most effective method is to trace one or two orders for books from start to finish. It has already been explained that all members of the Börsenverein are represented in Leipzig by a commissioner (with the exception of most, but not all, of the Leipzig firms, who, being on the spot, are able to act as their own commissioner), and that all deliveries are made 'free Leipzig.' It is essential that these two facts should be borne constantly in mind, as the whole machinery revolves round the commissioners, some fifty-seven in number, who owe no small share of their importance to the fact that the custom of free delivery Leipzig means, in effect, that all transactions take place as if at Leipzig, even though the

bookseller may be at Hamburg and the publisher at Munich.

Let us assume that the orders we are going to follow on their journey are given by a bookseller in Hamburg, and that they are for books published in Munich and Frankfurt. Every bookseller keeps a supply of printed order-forms (Bestell-Zettel) similar to the one shown below. The size is more or less uniform, and is less than 3×4 inches.

Von der firma

erbittet sich *J. C. Hinrichs'che Buchhandlung*

Sortiment

Leipzig, den 192

à cond (on sale)	*auf Monatskonto — bar — Preisangabe* (to monthly a/c — cash — Quote price)

As will be seen, it is so arranged that little more is needed than to fill in the name of the publisher at the top of the form and the name of the book in the space provided. Our Hamburg bookseller would fill in two of these forms and post them, not to Munich and Frankfurt as one might expect, but to Leipzig. Here then is the first economy — all the bookseller's orders go in one envelope to one address, viz., that of his commissioner. Immediately they are received in Leipzig those for publishers not represented by the booksellers' commissioner are sorted out at the Orders Clearing House (Bestellanstalt) under the name of the commissioner of the publisher. (It is quite conceivable

that the commissioner acting for the Hamburg bookseller and the Munich publisher are one and the same firm, as most commissioners have both publishers and booksellers on their list of clients.) The stream of orders through the Clearing House is unceasing, and they are collected continuously by the publishers' commissioners. The orders so collected may be of varying urgency and of different character. Urgent orders (*empfohlene Bestellungen*) are marked with a cross and are given preferential attention; they are executed with amazing promptitude, and, almost without exception, on the day of their receipt. Again, cash (*bar*) orders have to be handled differently from orders on sale or return (*à cond*).

We will assume that one of the orders we are following is an urgent cash order and the other an 'on sale' order to come at leisure. In both cases they are collected by the publisher's commissioner and taken to his own office for execution. In a very brief time the cash order is invoiced and packed with the amount to be collected clearly indicated upon the outside, and as evidence of the authority to ask for the money the actual order is attached.

The package is then sent without delay (the distances are negligible when compared with London or New York) to the Paket-Austausch-Stelle, which means literally the parcels exchange place, or, as we should call it, Parcels Clearing House. Theoretically, the commissioner acting for our Hamburg bookseller pays cash in exchange for the parcel, but, although a good deal of actual money does change hands, the commissioners have long since arranged for weekly settlement of the balance due to or from one

another, though, of course, debiting or crediting their clients' accounts forthwith just as a banker would.[1]

Here is economy number two, for the bookseller is saved from sending remittances to a score or more publishers, and the publishers are spared the clerical labour of making out and posting receipts to the hundreds of booksellers from whom they may be daily receiving remittances. It is thus no more trouble to either publisher or bookseller (even if hundreds of miles apart) to execute an order (even for a sixpenny pamphlet) than if they were next-door neighbours and the sale took place across the publisher's counter. Theoretically both parties are in Leipzig, wherever their business happens to be situated.

The parcel our bookseller's commissioner has just received is no doubt one of many that have come to hand for the same client. All these parcels are now packed up and sent in *one* shipment to his client. Here is a third economy, for there are no troublesome booking fees, contracts for fourteen-pound parcels, etc., but just one shipment at the lowest possible cost. How the freight charges are still farther reduced we shall see when we come to the 'on sale' or less urgent orders, to which we will now turn.

Immediately the urgent orders (*empfohlene Bestellungen*) are out of the way, but not before, attention is given to the

[1] Since the war and to meet the special difficulties of the inflationary period an alternative method has been evolved known as 'B.A.G.' (Buchhändler Abrechnungs-Genossenschaft). In effect, it is the substitution of a weekly account for cash payment on delivery of the goods in Leipzig. The whole transaction takes place in Leipzig just the same, but the bookseller is relieved from the necessity of paying for books *before* he has received them, while the publisher is able to rely upon receiving payment within little more than a fortnight.

others. The procedure is the same (save that there is, of course, no cash to collect) until the parcel reaches the bookseller's commissioner, and has been packed up with all other similar parcels for the same client. At this point a fourth economy is effected by sending in one consignment all the bundles intended for all the booksellers in the same town, if the town, as, for example, Hamburg, is sufficiently large to make it worth while to do so.

This enables the goods to be sent at 'truck rates.' As a matter of fact, *Bücher-Wagen* — viz., freight cars used specifically for this purpose — run on definite days and at scheduled times to all the big centres, including Basel and Vienna, for the Swiss and Austrian trade respectively. The mechanism is so perfect and yet so simple that many publishers in other parts of Germany make all their deliveries in Leipzig — keep all their stock there and refuse to deal with orders direct. It is quite unnecessary for the publisher to be resident in Leipzig if he carries stock there. Hence the wide distribution of publishers all over Germany, and the fact that some of the most important may be found in small University towns like Jena or Tübingen.

It is a triumph of organization: it enables the bookseller to supply a sixpenny pamphlet at the same ratio of profit as a guinea book (hence the large display of topical booklets to be seen in many of the German bookshops); it enables a publisher by means of an advertisement in the 'Börsenblatt' to put a new book effectively on the market within a matter of hours without the necessity of a personal canvass of the trade, because every bookseller automatically receives the 'Börsenblatt,' with its inserted or-

der form for all the new books advertised in that issue; it reduces correspondence, postage, freight charges, etc., to the minimum, and leaves booksellers much more time for the efficient running of their business. But the advantages are so obvious that there is no need for me to labour the point or to add further illustrations.

The recent trouble with the inflation of the currency entirely stopped for a time the 'on sale' method of doing business. It became, in fact, almost impossible to do any business at all, because, however quickly the publisher transacted the order and collected the cash, the value of the money was probably less than half the amount it was when the order was received.

Few people in America and England seem to realize that it takes a million million of the old marks to make one of present gold marks, so that if you possess, as I do, a million-mark note (worth £50,000 before the war), its value to-day as currency is less than its value for pulping. But there is no need for me to describe the innumerable measures that were taken by the German book trade to cope with these overwhelming difficulties. (How they survived them, many of the biggest firms could not tell you.) To-day they have once again a stable currency, and it is possible to supply books 'on sale or return' as in pre-war days.

Far be it from me to extol the 'on sale' method of doing business, because I doubt its desirability under English or American conditions, and where cloth-bound books are the rule, not the exception; but, given an organization such as exists at Leipzig, it has distinct advantages. They are to be seen in the quality of the stock to be found in the

bookshops in the smallest centres. Even so, it would serve little purpose if more were not done by the booksellers to dispose of the heavier type of book than is the custom with some English and, I imagine, American firms.

One of my functions, when serving as a volunteer in a retail bookshop in Germany, was to send new books on approval as they arrived from the publishers to the homes of potential purchasers, so that they might be examined at leisure. The theological professor actually had through his hands all the new theological books; similarly the economist or the lawyer, or whoever it was, received all the books likely to interest him. The books were only left with each for a few days, and it was astonishing how frequently these experts found some they did not like to return or that they simply could not do without.

The sellers of gramophone records have discovered how loath people are to part with anything that attracts them when once it has come into their possession, though the same people would have no difficulty in deciding not to purchase the same records when seen or heard in the dealer's shop. To sum up, people are tempted to buy books in Germany to an extent that seems inconceivable over here.

There are yet other ways in which the clearing-house system proves a boon, e.g., it is of great advantage to the second-hand book trade. The 'Börsenblatt' affords, apart from its many other uses, a daily equivalent of 'The Clique,' thus enabling booksellers to advertise for their requirements very promptly. There is, furthermore, no need to spend postage on reporting books: all the 'reports'

can go in one envelope to Leipzig and be sorted out in the Bestellanstalt in the same way as the orders. Similarly, orders for second-hand books can, if more convenient, be sent via Leipzig, and, in any case, the cash can be collected there without any bother of drawing cheques or buying postal orders.

Again, a publisher wishing to distribute prospectuses has no need to incur the expense of posting them. He has merely to address them and pass them over in bulk to his commissioner to distribute through the clearing house. They will thus reach every bookseller with his next parcel.

Even the insurance of the parcels is arranged collectively, and can be effected, if desired, for a very trifling charge.

There is no compulsion; the mechanism is there for those who choose to use it. Any one, for example, who prefers to send his circulars or cash direct is perfectly free to do so. The organization depends upon its own merits.

It would take us too far afield even to give a list of the other allied associations, but I ought perhaps to mention the Verleger Verein — the Publishers' Union — which, among other useful activities, keeps a credit index that would be the joy of all English publishers' cashiers and the dismay of all dilatory booksellers. Every member of the Publishers' Union is called upon each year to indicate on a simple form the names of the booksellers with whom he has done business, and whether they have paid their accounts when due. These records are collated, and the results sent in confidence to the members of the Publishers' Union. It is thus possible to see at a glance how any firm stands, and,

in consequence, accounts are paid promptly and few bad debts are incurred.

When I have described the German organization to British publishers or booksellers, I have almost invariably been met with the remark, 'Splendid, but you would be up against the wholesalers if you tried to establish any such system over here.' It is assumed that a complete organization such as I have described eliminates the wholesaler, but this is far from being the case. The wholesale bookseller (*Bar-Sortiment*) flourishes and serves as useful a function in Leipzig as in London (I am not sure that he does not make more money in Leipzig!); and it may be interesting to observe that the German counterpart of Simpkins are also the leading commissioners, and represent over seven hundred firms. It is very natural that the bookseller wanting a representative at the clearing house should appoint his wholesaler.

III. Its Application to Great Britain

A 'Clearing House' for books such as exists in Leipzig and elsewhere is a piece of machinery; it carries no stock, because orders are given *through*, not *to*, the Clearing House.

The use of a 'clearing house' does not involve any change in the ultimate destination of any order, and does not obviate the need of a wholesale firm like Simpkins. Booksellers who order from a wholesaler to-day would continue to order from a wholesaler; those who prefer to order direct would still be free to do so. The only changes would be:

1. Orders, whether made out to a wholesaler or to individual publishers, would be posted in one envelope to one central office. Here they would be rapidly sorted and delivered to, or better, collected by, the addressees at 9 A.M., and such other times as proved expedient. The advantages of this are fourfold:

(*a*) The booksellers would be saved considerable postage.
(*b*) The orders would come by letter post and not dribble in all day long by halfpenny post as at present.
(*c*) The Orders Clearing Office could be used for 'town orders' and thus eliminate much expensive 'collecting.'
(*d*) Queries (not letters) could be sent to publishers in the same way — another saving for the booksellers.

2. The orders after they were executed, as at present, would all be delivered to a central parcels clearing depot. Here they would be sorted out, and the entire requirements of each bookseller (better still the entire requirements of all the booksellers of any town) would be dispatched direct from this one source. The advantages of such an organization are manifold:

(*a*) The publishers (and the wholesalers) would have only one centre to which to deliver the goods instead of many.
(*b*) The booking fees would be eliminated, or, alternatively, be used to maintain the depot instead of to enrich the carriers.
(*c*) The Parcels Clearing Office could take the fullest advantage of such economies as can now be effected by road transport. It would, for instance, be an easy matter to arrange a motor delivery service for an area of some forty miles round London.
(*d*) The Parcels Clearing Office, being run by the book trade

for the benefit of the book trade and not for profit, should be able to save booksellers considerable 'carriage' charges.

(*e*) It should be practicable with our own organization to 'close down' at least an hour later than the general carriers. Trade managers do not need to be told what a blessing that would be. It would enable far more orders to be executed by return.

(*f*) Catalogues, publicity material, etc., could be delivered in bulk to the clearing house, and for a nominal charge distributed to the entire trade in the daily or weekly parcels.

(*g*) A goods train service for non-urgent orders to distant places where freight is a big item could be arranged. In some cases it would be practicable to send weekly consignments at 'truck rate.'

The suggestion, in brief, is to arrange the purely mechanical side of distribution rather more conveniently and economically than at present, but to leave undisturbed the relationship of bookseller, wholesaler, and publisher.

The chief difficulty is one unconnected with the book trade, viz., the London traffic problem. Publishers are now scattered over such a wide area that it would not be easy to find a convenient centre. The difficulty might be got over by having one in the East and another in the West. Probably, however, a coöperative town delivery service is all that is immediately practicable.

IV. The 'On Sale or Return' System

To avoid any possible misapprehension, may I add that in advocating the clearing-house system I am *not* recommending the introduction of the 'on sale or return' method

of doing business. Despite the contrary impression, the two things are entirely distinct.

As is often the case, those who know least about the actual working of 'on sale or return' business in the countries where it is the general practice are the most dogmatic in praising or condemning it. Greater knowledge reveals too clearly both its manifold advantages and drawbacks to warrant any such confident expression of opinion.

Some of the advantages have already been mentioned. Unquestionably it ensures better stock being kept at bookshops in the smaller centres, though not necessarily so effectively as some would claim. It enables the public to see and examine all the latest books without any special effort, an undoubted advantage which could be partly gained by an extension of the existing practice of sending books 'on approval' for a prescribed time for a bookseller's special customers.

Amongst the drawbacks of the method are: It involves the printing and binding of more copies than would otherwise be needed; it leaves the publisher, therefore, with more surplus (and partially damaged) stock; it involves much additional clerical labour and thus greatly increases working expenses, which are already unduly high; it throws a greater financial burden on the publishers; it delays the author's royalty accounts.

The retail bookseller, who for some years past has maintained that he requires blank per cent extra discount to cover his losses on dead stock, will find a difficulty in explaining why the publisher should not grant blank per cent less discount when the risk is eliminated. On the Con-

tinent it is assumed as a matter of course that books supplied 'O/S' carry a lesser discount. Over here, on the contrary, one encounters booksellers who assume the same discount will be received when no risk is being taken and no capital invested; there are even some who seriously expect a larger margin for handling books 'on sale or return.' All of which shows how little thought has been given to the question.

One thing is clear to anyone who really studies the matter. With our present defective organization a general introduction of the 'on sale' method, even were it desirable, is impracticable. It would be killed by the cost of the carriage (both ways) on the unsold stock, apart altogether from the spoilage. Let anyone who doubts this statement investigate the cost under the highly efficient organization in Leipzig which I have described, where everything possible is done to achieve economy, and where paper, not cloth-bound, books are the rule. Even under those favourable circumstances there is a constant groan at the cost of carriage on the '*Remittenden*,' or 'Crabs,' as the unsold 'returns' are called, and a tendency to reduce 'on sale" business to the minimum.

There need be no hesitation, therefore, about replying to the 'on sale' enthusiast: 'First get a clearing house and an efficient organization, then, if you still insist, the "on sale" question can be discussed.'

The 'clearing house' as a system is not a foreign institution: English bankers adopted it a hundred and fifty years ago. It is merely its application to the book trade that we owe to Germany.

Since the foregoing was written a representative delegation of British booksellers and publishers has visited Amsterdam and Leipzig, at the suggestion of the Society of Bookmen, in order to study the clearing-house system at work. I would urge any interested in these matters to secure a copy of the report issued by the delegation on its return. It is obtainable from the secretary of the Society of Bookmen.

CHAPTER VIII

PUBLICITY, ETC.

DOES any author think his book has been adequately or properly advertised? The answer to that question will explain how dangerous it is for a publisher to mention, or even to suggest, that there are any limitations to what can be accomplished by advertising. Should a publisher ever be rash enough to do so, it is at once assumed that he does not believe in advertising, and he is dismissed as a bad publisher. Anyone listening to some authors might easily be led to believe that a publisher is good or bad according to the amount of newspaper space he takes, even if it is chiefly used to advertise the publisher's name. Whether the advertisement is well or ill done; whether even the author who is talking, merely has his name included in a list of scores and scores of titles, or so indifferently set as to be scarcely legible, does not seem to weigh in the balance. The important point, consciously or unconsciously, would seem to be the superficial area occupied by the publisher in the particular papers read by the author in question.

Now, the results of this are twofold. In the first place, there is a conspiracy of silence amongst publishers in regard to newspaper advertising. Secondly, there is a tendency to do certain advertising for the sake of appearances and not for the sales it will secure. It would seem, therefore, to be high time to examine the whole question dispassionately and to see whether the most obvious forms of

advertising as carried out by the least intelligent firms are necessarily the best, or whether, for many books at any rate, other forms of advertising are not more fruitful of results. When discussing the question of advertising books, we are confronted once again with the trouble that besets nearly all discussions of publishing questions, viz., that two out of three people taking part in the discussion will be thinking about novels, and not about books in general, of which novels only form a fractional part.

'*Blurbs.*' If our treatment of the question of publicity in relation to books is to be at all complete, we must begin at the beginning, and that is with the writing of the descriptive paragraph which is to appear in the publisher's list, on the jacket of the book, and in advance information sent to the publisher's travellers and to the press. These brief descriptive paragraphs, or 'blurbs' as they are sometimes called, are most difficult to write. (If any one doubts the assertion, let him try his hand at writing one of some famous work of the past.) To be read, the paragraphs must be brief; to attract the newspaper editor they must, if possible, have news value; to be of service to booksellers and librarians they must give an adequate description of the contents of the book: possibly indicate the author's qualifications for writing it. In the case of novels, the extent to which the details of the plot should be given is a problem needing special consideration. It does not follow that when an author is asked to write a paragraph the publishers will use it exactly as submitted. The 'blurb' may be much too long; in any case it may contain phrases that

would make it inacceptable. Publishers reserve, and most authors willingly concede to publishers, the right to edit and adapt these paragraphs. Even so, the revision has to be done with discretion and due regard to the author's feelings. If the author describes himself as 'the greatest authority' on a question, the publisher is confronted either with the necessity of reducing him to 'one of the great authorities' or being told by the reviewers that the claim made for the author on the jacket is preposterous. Although the words are the author's, the statement when printed becomes the publisher's.

Many authors have the most vague ideas as to what publishers can do in the way of getting paragraphs inserted in the press. It would indeed be pleasant if publishers had the power that is sometimes attributed to them, but the fact remains that editors please themselves, or rather endeavour to please their public, in deciding what they will include in their columns. They will include a paragraph if they consider it has news value, and they will most certainly exclude it if it has none. A point to be remembered is that a paragraph may have news value for one paper and not for another. Nearly all paragraphs regarding forthcoming books have news value for, let us say, the 'Publishers' Circular,' and that paper accordingly prints nearly everything of the kind it receives, and usually in exactly the form submitted. Paragraphs announcing new books of importance are a distinctive feature of 'The Times Literary Supplement' and of some of the dailies; but in these cases the paragraphs are almost invariably the work of a member of the staff of the paper who devotes time to the

collection of news of this character. The skill with which it is presented is an object-lesson to the budding paragraphist or the author confronted for the first time with the necessity of writing a 'blurb.' Of course here, as in so many other directions, imprint counts. Newspaper editors know which are the firms that may be said to buy their manuscripts by the dozen or even 'thirteen as twelve,' and which are those that carefully select them. A book on some serious subject announced by one firm is sure to be good, and the paragraph about it will receive consideration. The announcement of a similar book from another firm will be as certainly disregarded.

Review copies. The publisher's imprint is of still more importance where reviewing is concerned. Review copies pour in upon the literary editor of the leading papers in overwhelming numbers. It is impossible for any ordinary paper to attempt to deal with all of them. In most offices a preliminary classification is made the moment the parcels are opened. Experience has shown that the books bearing some imprints will be of importance, and that those bearing others can immediately be discarded. And here be it noted that most literary editors will not be influenced by whether the publisher is a big advertiser or not, but by the intrinsic merits of his publications. It is the best books rather than the best sellers that will attract the editor's eye, unless, of course, the latter have news value and call for attention (as some books do) in the news columns rather than in the literary columns of the paper.

The distribution of review copies is an important function of the publisher. Just because it is a partly mechan-

ical task there is a tendency in some offices to make it entirely mechanical and to delegate the work to a junior. This, I am sure, is a mistake. It does not follow that the publisher need necessarily make out each list himself, but he certainly should cast his eye over most of them. To facilitate the work, many publishers have a printed review list on which are included as far as possible the names of all papers to which they are accustomed to send review copies. This is usually classified under such headings as dailies, weeklies, monthlies, provincial, dominions, etc. In this case, all that is needed is to tick the names of the papers which are to have the particular book. If it is on some special subject, the publisher will almost surely consult his author to make certain that no relevant paper of importance is omitted. In any case, well-informed suggestions from authors are always acceptable. A recommendation that copies should be sent to papers long since defunct does not inspire confidence. On the other hand, there are authors to whom the publisher would unhesitatingly send the printed review list to mark.

The publisher having delivered the review copy at the editor's office, and having obtained a receipt for it, has done his part; he cannot be expected to bombard editors with letters asking when they are going to review the book, or inquiring why they have not done so. What authors do is their own affair, but they will be wise to act with the utmost discretion, for it is more easy to do harm than to do good. Many editors have a most unfortunate habit, when being pestered by authors, of getting out of the difficulty by saying they have not had a review copy. This is distinctly

unfair to the publisher, because it is a direct reflection upon his efficiency. In some cases the author goes away and condemns his publisher unheard; more often he sends in a complaint. In every case where such a charge has been made against my firm, and it has been done scores of times, we have had no difficulty in proving delivery and showing the editor a receipt for the book signed by some member of his staff. In some newspaper offices, the review copies are left lying about, and no adequate record is kept of them. In most of the best, however, great care is taken, and the literary editor watches jealously over the books.

The sale of review copies greatly disturbs some authors and publishers, and the Authors' Society recently made an interesting inquiry into the whole question. Few publishers nowadays deface their review copies by stamping them on the title page; some firms have never done so. Reviewers are seldom well paid, and are fully entitled to what they can get by the sale of the copies. At the same time, however, it would seem fair to ask that a decent interval be allowed to elapse before they are sold. In order that notices may appear on the day of publication it is usual to send out the review copies a few days beforehand. There have been cases where the review copies have been on sale at the second-hand booksellers' *before* the book was published. That is indefensible. I think that not less than a month, but preferably not less than two months, should be allowed to elapse. The trouble, of course, is that the reviewer knows that the sooner he sells his copy the better the price he is likely to get for it.

A printed slip accompanies all review copies, giving the

date of publication and requesting that no notice shall appear before that day. Any newspaper infringing the understanding by publishing a notice before the date of publication could not expect to receive further review copies in advance, but there is seldom any difficulty in regard to this. The trouble to-day is to secure prompt notice. The more reviews on the day of publication, or within a week thereafter, the better for the book. Before the war, if a book was not reviewed within a few weeks of publication, it was probable that it would not be reviewed at all. Nowadays there are many instances where none of the best reviews appear within the first three weeks of publication.

The selling value of press notices is most uncertain. There are cases where a single review in either 'The Times Literary Supplement,' 'The Spectator,' 'The New Statesman,' or 'The Nation,' has started a book on its successful course; but excellent notices of another book in all four papers may sometimes be almost without effect. Two things are quite certain, viz., that good reviews do not necessarily mean good sales, nor the absence of reviews bad sales. The amount of space devoted to a book is sometimes more important than what is said about it, but even that is no criterion. The value of reviews in the news part of a paper is not always as great as would be supposed — probably because the news editor takes all the piquant things out of the book and the reader does not feel there is any necessity to bother to get the book himself. Few books in recent times have had half the notice given to Dr. Montague Lomax's 'Experiences of an Asylum Doctor.' Practically

all the papers with large circulations devoted columns to discussions about it in the days immediately following publication, and it even resulted in a Royal Commission. The suggestion was frequently made that the author had made a fortune out of it and was going to retire on the proceeds. That statement was repeated in my presence at a dinner-party. A discussion of the book ensued, from which you would have gathered that all had read, even if they had not bought it. I asked every one in turn whether he had purchased a copy. Not one had done so; only two of all those present had even borrowed it from a lending library. This must have been typical of what had happened everywhere, because at the time (about four months after publication) less than seven hundred copies had been sold, and the receipts had not at that date covered the cost of printing, paper, and binding, let alone yielded a penny to either author or publisher. The press had so 'gutted' the book that few people felt there was any necessity to read it.

Applications for review copies are often received by publishers direct from reviewers; authors often ask that copies of their books should be addressed to a particular reviewer instead of to the editor (or the literary editor, if there be one). Such requests have to be closely scrutinized, if not entirely disregarded. To comply with them is to usurp the editor's function (or at any rate to attempt to do so), and to decide which of his staff shall be entrusted with the reviewing of some particular book. Editors very naturally resent such interference, and in any case it is neither polite nor desirable to 'short-circuit' them in this fashion. It is perfectly simple to ask the editor if it is his wish that

the copy should go direct to the particular reviewer, or alternatively to suggest to the reviewer that he should ask his editor for the book.

Press cuttings. Publishers expect to receive voucher copies of papers containing notices of their books, and in most publishing offices fairly complete sets of press cuttings are available for inspection by authors. But as they are generally pasted into large folio volumes they cannot be sent to them. Should the publisher receive any duplicate cuttings, he is usually prepared to present them to the author, but if a complete set is desired the best plan is to subscribe to a good press-cutting agency, who for quite a small charge supply cuttings of all notices that appear. Durrants, of Holburn Viaduct, is one of several such reliable firms, It is essential that they should be instructed before publication, as it is by no means easy to get cuttings from back numbers of newspapers.

Some publishers take much more pains than others to check the results of the distribution of review copies. My own firm keeps a statistical record from which it is possible to see at a glance what books any particular paper has received, and exactly which of them it has noticed. If the proportion noticed by any paper becomes unreasonably low, fewer books are sent. Should notices cease to appear, the paper is dropped from the list and copies are sent when specifically asked for, and not otherwise. On the other hand, if the proportion noticed is considerable, there is a natural tendency to send more books to that paper, even though it is not one of first-rate importance, because a review in print is worth two in prospect. The maintenance

of such a record means trouble, but unquestionably saves wastage.

There is much less connection between reviews and advertisements than is commonly supposed or than some advertisement canvassers would like one to believe. Literary editors are mostly very jealous of their independence, and rightly so. Opinions that can be bought carry little weight, and for this reason, if for no other, the wise publisher welcomes independence in the reviewer. Unfortunately, it would not be true to say that there was never any connection between advertisements and reviews, because in the case of at any rate two very important and independent papers such a connection may be traced. How it arises is easily explained. Far more reviews are put into type than ever appear — at the last moment some have to be discarded. The advertisement manager who is interested in the 'make-up' and is on the spot is allowed in some offices to decide which of the less important notices shall go in. But, taking it as a whole, reviewing is very fairly done and the best books seldom get overlooked, particularly if the publisher knows his job.

Other free copies. In most agreements, provision is made for the author to have six[1] presentation copies on publication and to have the right to purchase further copies for his own personal use on trade terms. Authors often ask for these copies to be sent them before the official date of publication. It is seldom wise for the publisher to comply with such a request, because the circulation of copies before publication, particularly among the author's friends, almost

[1] Twelve in the United States. — F. G.

invariably causes the publisher trouble. A friend who sees the copy and has one on order wants to know why it has not been delivered to him. When the bookseller tells him it is 'not out,' he replies quite rightly that he has seen a copy. The bookseller is charged with incompetence, and, knowing that he is in no way at fault, is apt to suspect unpleasant things of the publisher. This is a frequent, not an imaginary occurrence, and when a publisher shows reluctance to part with copies before publication, he has good reason for so doing.

It is often said, and quite correctly, that the best way to start the sale of a book is to get it talked about by the right people. With this end in view authors often suggest the distribution of copies to prominent politicians and writers. The idea may be sound, but unfortunately nearly all such lists seem to include a Prime Minister who, it is perfectly certain, has no time under modern conditions (whatever Mr. Gladstone did) to devote to the reading of current literature, certain politicians who are known never to read a book if they can avoid it, and authors who have frankly stated that they have no time to give to such a purpose. The trouble is in the right selection of recipients, and, except for specialist publications, the difficulty is usually insuperable.

The total number of free copies distributed varies with the book, and might conceivably be as few as twenty in the case of a book with an exceptionally limited appeal, or as many as two hundred in the case of an inexpensive book on a popular subject or an educational textbook. The usual number varies between sixty and one hundred.

But demands for free copies of their publications descend upon publishers from many other directions. It would occupy too much space to attempt to enumerate them; were a tithe complied with, yet more publishers would find their way to Carey Street. Strange as it may sound, never a week goes by without publishers having to explain that they produce books in the hope of *selling* them, and that the widespread impression that they make their living by giving books away is a delusion.

When a library is to be started, no one thinks of asking Maples to give the furniture and Catesbys to give the linoleum, but it often seems to be considered quite in order to try to cadge the books from publishers. This is all part of the average Englishman's idea[1] that a book is a thing one begs, borrows, sometimes steals, but never buys except under compulsion.

Learned societies and similar institutions always seem to me especial offenders, both because they exist presumably to promote the study of the subject in which they are interested, and because they ought to know better. So far from encouraging the publication of learned works by the purchase of copies, they seem with one accord to devise means of securing gratis even the one copy required for their own library. One such society (of which I am a fellow), with an income of many thousand pounds, boasts that although it has to spend a few hundreds on rebinding and the purchase

[1] The 'idea' is not confined to the Englishmen. Probably fifty per cent of the readers of a popular book *ride free*. It is not uncommon for a copy of a work of fiction to be taken out of a public library by many hundred different readers, none of whom pays a cent to either author or publisher. — F. G.

of old books, its total expenditure on new books amounts to only about 2½*d.* per annum, because all the review copies sent to their Journal are claimed for the library. Should the publisher object to providing the library in this manner, a letter is usually sent to the author asking him to 'present' the book. The very people who act in this fashion are apt to complain of the lack of enterprise of British as opposed to continental publishers, and never hesitate to point out how many more works of research, etc., are issued by German publishers. They seem oblivious of their own share of the responsibility. A German publisher of a first-rate learned work knows that all institutions interested in the subject will buy copies; the British publisher realizes (alas!) that he will be expected to donate them. If the German publisher is sure of selling £50 worth of copies and the British publisher is equally certain of having to give the same £50 worth of books away, the difference between their respective positions is more than sufficient to turn the scale and to make a possible profit a certain loss.

When wealthy institutions in the U.S.A. and at home ask my firm to 'present' them with a copy of a shilling pamphlet (as many did recently), my colleague has the following 'form letter' in readiness to send them:

We have received your letter of.....and are sending you, as requested, a copy of.....by.....

At the same time we cannot but marvel that the funds of .....should apparently be unable to stand the strain of purchasing a copy of this shilling pamphlet, and we sincerely deplore the circumstances which must have compelled you to appeal to our charity on behalf of your professors and students.

It has proved uniformly successful; it brings both the shilling and a better understanding of the publisher's position.

Of that same pamphlet, by the way, the applications for free copies amounted to at least three times the number sold, so engrained is the habit of regarding publishers alternatively as philanthropists or endowed institutions.

Newspaper advertising. After this digression let us return to newspaper advertising, which represents the only kind of publicity given serious attention by some firms. There is a sense in which we know little or nothing about either the value or the effect of newspaper advertising in its relation to books, and yet there can be no publisher who has been in business for any length of time who has not gleaned a great deal of empirical knowledge. The ordinary advertising expert is of very little assistance to the book publisher. On that point, at any rate, most publishers who have made the experiment of employing one will agree. The problems that the ordinary advertiser has to face are different in many essentials, as advertisement agents often discover for the first time when suddenly called upon to apply their expert knowledge to books. In the first place, there are very severe limits to what it is possible to spend on any one book, because the turnover of any one book is so limited. A publisher is dealing with pence where the seller of a staple commodity is dealing with pounds. Again, and this is a most important point, the demand for publishers' wares is seldom repetitive, like the demand which successful advertising can secure for, let us say, soap or cigarettes. If 'No. 13 soap' is actually found to be 'unlucky for dirt,' further tablets will be bought and used by

the customer who has been induced to try the soap as a result of an advertising campaign. As a rule, one copy of a book satisfies the demand for the book on the part of the particular customer who has bought it, and (alas!) will probably also satisfy the demand of the many friends to whom he is sure to lend it. There is an added difficulty, and that is that we may nearly all be potential buyers of some particular brand of soap, but there are few books of which more than an infinitesimal fraction of the public can truthfully be regarded as potential purchasers. Our requirements in the matter of books are much more personal and individual than our needs in the matter of food or clothing, or even toothpaste. This point is consistently overlooked by those who consider that large space advertisements in the daily press are the only things that count. Advertisement consultants are quite correct when they point out that the papers with the big circulations are sometimes the cheapest if calculated at per person reached, but their argument, to be valid, presupposes that the person reached is a potential buyer, and this is where the daily newspaper may conceivably be the most costly and least successful medium of all for the advertising of some kinds of books. The advertiser is obviously paying for so much circulation that is useless for his purpose. All successful advertisers know that an appeal addressed to those definitely interested in the article offered is more effective than two or three times the number of appeals to those who 'may be' or 'ought to be' interested. To put the matter in another way, if a book appeals to most of the readers of, let us say, the 'News of the World,' it is probably sound business to advertise it in

that paper, but if it appeals to only one per cent of the 'News of the World' public, it is a costly and ineffective way of approaching that one per cent.

The advertising of half a dozen books may, and probably does, involve half a dozen methods, as well as a variety of channels. The very vulgar type of advertisement may be suitable for vulgar works intended for the vulgar-minded, but such advertisements would merely repel the more refined bookbuyer. The method as well as the channel of approach has then to be considered. Special intelligence is needed, because with the things of the mind saturation point is much more quickly reached than in other directions, and the attitude of the buyer is more critical. 'Bright ideas' and 'new stunts' for book advertising are all very well, but have to be sparingly used to be effective. They are not easy to maintain at a high level, and they will almost certainly prove to be unsuited to some of the books being advertised. In arranging his advertisements, therefore, the book publisher is usually compelled to fall back upon good plain type, even though he may be charged with lack of enterprise; but it must be good type, and the increasing pains now taken with the lay-out of book advertisements may be observed in the advertisement columns of any literary paper. The best results are not obtained without effort and expense.

Some newspaper offices are quite incapable of setting a book advertisement decently — to begin with, they may not have the right type. To meet such difficulties and secure the best results, publishers are frequently compelled to employ such a firm as the Westminster Press to set their

advertisements for them, and to supply the newspapers with moulds or electros. This adds considerably to the expense of the advertisement, but likewise to its effectiveness. It further standardizes the setting, and thus secures the repetitive impression which is so important in advertising.

The difference in the effect upon the eye may be seen in the two examples of good and bad type given below:

PUBLISHING
THE TRUTH

PUBLISHING
THE TRUTH

There is a distinct limit to what people will read in the way of descriptive matter. On the other hand, it is often extremely difficult to give in a few words a really telling description of a book. The question that ought to be faced, but seldom is faced, is, What is the advertisement designed to achieve? Is it expected to make some one buy the book who has never heard anything about it or its author before; is it intended to inform those who know the author or who are interested in the subject that the book has been published; alternatively, is it meant to be a reminder to those who have read reviews of the book, and are interested in it, that they ought to buy it; is it merely desired to provide a convenient list of books for subscribers to ask for at their lending library; or is it to advertise the publisher rather than the books? The end desired makes all the difference, or should make all the difference, in the means adopted to attain it.

Personally, and I am quite aware of the risk I run in

making this statement, that it will be used in a quite unjustifiable way against me, I do not believe that many people buy books *merely* because they see them advertised. If the book is being talked about, an advertisement may stimulate them to procure it. Were it on a subject in which they are interested, or by an author whose work they admire, advertisements might prompt them to go to a bookshop and get it when otherwise they might not do so. Had it been recommended to them by a friend, an advertisement would perhaps stimulate them to buy it. This theory that book advertisement is more likely to remind or stimulate people to whom the thought of buying the book has already occurred, rather than to create a bookbuyer out of the void, is borne out by almost every publisher's experience, viz., that if a book is not selling and shows no sign of selling, no amount of advertising will make it sell to any extent commensurate with the expenditure; whereas if a book shows signs of catching on, careful and discriminating advertising may yield the most excellent results. The contention that books can be made to sell *merely* as the result of an advertising campaign has been tested over and over again. It has often been proved successful in the case of sets of books, when it has been possible to convince the public that they are needed as articles of furniture in their homes, but it has seldom, if ever, been successful in the case of an individual book which the public had not otherwise shown signs of wanting.

One of the most interesting examples of recent years was a certain two-shilling book upon which about £2500 was most skilfully spent. The advertising certainly secured it a

substantial circulation, but the gross proceeds of the sales only amounted to about £2800. It is quite true that to sell 40,000 copies of a serious work was a distinct achievement, but publishers can hardly be expected to make a habit of spending £2500 to secure such a result. They would rightly point out that it would be nearly as cheap to give the books away.

Here is another example out of many I could give:[1] Nearly £3000 was spent in securing the sale of over 70,000 copies of another two-shilling book. The gross proceeds were about £5000, and the result was, of course, uneconomic, but here is the interesting point: of a succeeding book by the same author, rather less technical it is true, and published at 1*s.* 6*d.*, over 90,000 copies were sold, despite the fact that only £156 was devoted to advertising it. This is the clearest evidence that any one could wish that it is the following books by the same author that derive the maximum benefit from any extensive advertising. What better justification could there be for the claim that a publisher needs a definite option upon subsequent work before embarking upon any big campaign.

When on one occasion the author of an unsaleable book maintained that it could be sold by extensive advertising, my firm challenged him to spend as much as he liked, and where he liked. We offered to carry out all his instructions and do all the work free of charge, and left him free to secure the best expert advice if he desired, on the under-

[1] A very striking instance was Lord Beaverbrook's *Politicians and the Press:* a careful analysis of the figures will be found in Constable's Monthly List of April, 1926.

standing that if the *gross proceeds* of the sales from then onwards exceeded two thirds of the advertising expenditure, we would ourselves pay the entire amount, but that otherwise it should be borne by the author. The challenge was accepted; the advertising was very well done, but the proceeds of the sales did not amount to so much as half of the sum spent.

In brief, the conclusion at which we arrive, regrettable as it may sound, is that it pays to advertise a book if it shows signs of being successful without advertising, but that it does not pay to advertise at all extensively a book that shows no signs of catching on. I have purposely added those two words 'not extensively,' because some advertising is needed in every case in order to inform librarians, booksellers, and others of the existence of the book; but that does not necessarily mean advertising in the ordinary daily papers. It does, however, include advertising in the trade papers, such as the 'Publishers' Circular,' and the 'Bookseller,' in 'The Times Literary Supplement,' and some of the better weeklies. Book advertisements in such papers are often as carefully examined as the text. In advertising in them, one is addressing an audience definitely wanting information about new books; but this, as we have seen, is very different from trying to arouse interest where it does not exist. My beliefs have recently been fortified by some very interesting statistical data collected by that enterprising publisher, Eugen Diedrich of Jena, who had the happy idea of inserting in all his publications a postcard asking his readers to let him know what prompted them to buy the book. The replies were ana-

lysed by M. Giese-Huser and first appeared in 'Deutsche Psychologie,' Bd. 111, Heft 5–6, Langensalza, 1921, Wendt und Klauwell, though the experiment was actually made in 1914. The figures are so instructive that I give them below.

	Men	Women
1. Reviews	18.1	17.6
2. Personal recommendations from friends and others	14.2	17.0
3. Other works by the same author	13.8	12.0
4. Special prospectuses	9.8	5.0
5. Window displays	8.6	5.0
6. Publishers' catalogues and lists	6.7	5.4
7. Bookseller's recommendation	5.2	7.0
8. Subject being studied	4.7	3.3
9. Advertisements	4.0	1.2
10. Newspaper articles	3.0	3.3
11. Lectures	2.8	5.0
12. Quotations	2.6	3.3
13. Specimens of the text	2.1	2.5
14. Personality of the author	1.3	1.7
15. Copies received on approval from booksellers	0.8	1.2

16, 17, and 18, all less than 1 per cent, include such items as quality of the production.

I do not wish to suggest that such a limited experiment is in any way conclusive or that the reasons given in Germany would be applicable in England, but the results are none the less illuminating. First, in both lists of what prompted people to buy the books, comes 'reviews'; second, 'personal recommendations'; third, other works by the same author; and special prospectuses, fourth. Advertisements only appear ninth on the list in the answers from men, and near the bottom of the list in the answers from women.

Other forms of publicity. I would draw special attention to the high place occupied in the list by 'special prospectuses,' and this brings us to the whole question of circularization as a means of interesting people in books. It is not a form of advertising of which there is much outward evidence. A publisher who spent his advertising appropriation in this way would, in the eyes of many authors, be a 'bad' publisher, whereas the publisher who spent the same amount in the daily press with far less result would be a 'good' publisher, but the fact would none the less remain that, for many books, this form of advertising and advertising in specialist papers often pay best. If circularizing is to be well done it means the patient collection of the best possible lists of names and addresses of those interested in given subjects. It is always essential to have your target very clearly in view if you are to hit it. The lists will, of course, include libraries at home and abroad, because they are the biggest buyers for serious books. Some firms have built up most profitable businesses almost entirely upon such advertising. Success or failure will depend chiefly upon the care with which the names and addresses are selected, but also upon the attractiveness of the circular, facsimile letter, or prospectus. In some cases, a postcard may bring excellent results, particularly as a follow-up or reminder. Some booksellers will give effective help with the distribution of prospectuses, but this side of their activities has not yet been as carefully thought out or as fully developed as it might be. If more booksellers kept a classified card-index of all their customers and potential customers, a great deal more could be done in coöpera-

tion with publishers. In some cases, for instance, it would be quite possible for the publisher to produce a circular letter suitable for booksellers to sign and send out, thus making the appeal more local and personal.

One form of publicity which I have often thought desirable has recently been adopted by the firm of Felix Meiner of Leipzig, which now sends out particulars of its new books in the form of small cards so printed and arranged as to be suitable for use by librarians and booksellers in a card-index. Whether in the grouping of subjects the Dewey decimal classification has been adopted, I do not know, but there is, of course, no reason why that should not be done. It would certainly be a great convenience to librarians throughout the world were particulars of books sent to them in that form with all the requisite information included. It means a good deal of trouble, and although the English book trade is possibly not yet sufficiently organized to make the scheme worth while, this method of sending out particulars of books will, I am convinced, some day be generally adopted.

The publisher's complete catalogues, and the announcement lists which he issues three or four times a year, still afford one of the most valuable means of publicity. Few authors realize the number of such lists distributed by some firms, or the care with which they are looked through. The result of the dispatch of a big batch of announcement lists can often be traced in the next week's orders, and it does not follow that the only results obtained by this means are those of which there is immediate evidence. Many firms in addition now publish house organs.

They vary greatly both in their character and in their cost. It is doubtful whether the most elaborate and expensive are necessarily the most effective. The extent to which they actually affect sales is very difficult to determine. If they are to be consistently well done, much time and energy must be devoted to them. As has already been mentioned, personal letters count for a very great deal in promoting the sale of books. A single letter may be the means of securing much publicity of the very greatest value. It is not always the publicity that costs most that is the most prolific of results, nor — and this must be emphasized again — is the most effective publicity work necessarily the kind most obvious to the author's eye.

Other publications of the same firm are, of course, constantly used as a means of securing publicity. Each book is made, as far as practicable, to advertise its fellows. Not only the jackets, but any spare pages at the end of a volume are devoted to this purpose. The latter have special value, as they confront the reader when he has just finished a book and is most likely to be allured by a new one.

Loose insets were at one time freely used as an advertising medium, but were discarded when the Australian customs, in their zeal to tax all advertisement matter not printed in Australia, decreed that, as the duty was assessable upon the weight, the importer must either remove the loose insets or that the books themselves must be weighed as part of the advertisement material and included in the assessment. Some publishers, nevertheless, still insert insets, but they run grave risks in so doing, if they do not remove them from any copies destined for Australia.

Authors' portraits are being increasingly used; in America they seem to be an essential part of the advertising campaign. With a well-known author this is understandable, as it adds a further kind of personal connection between the author and the reader, but the use of photographs is no longer restricted to established writers. Perhaps it is well to remind authors that photographs intended for this purpose should have been taken at their own expense, not 'free sittings,' as otherwise fees will be payable to the photographer, and the extent to which the photograph is likely to be used will be thereby limited. A carefully mounted photograph is not required, a simple unmounted silver print, which the photographer will supply quite cheaply, being much more effective. Small snapshots are seldom of much use for reproduction, because in block-making it is more usual to reduce the size of the photograph than to enlarge it.

The small poster is another form of advertising which has recently come very much to the front, particularly in connection with popular novels. Its use is necessarily restricted to cases where the advertising appropriation is substantial, because comparatively little can be accomplished for less than £100. Furthermore, this kind of advertising is not a substitute for other forms. However thoroughly it is done, it does not obviate the necessity of advertising in such papers as 'The Times Literary Supplement.' Moreover, it is usually restricted to the London tubes and perhaps a few sandwichmen, and although it is a method highly esteemed by authors, they would be less impressed if they remembered that its effects do not penetrate very

far, and that it is questionable whether they are other than fleeting. Tube advertising is still in the experimental stage; we may doubt whether it is much help to booksellers: its chief use is probably in stimulating demand at the circulating libraries, and thus forcing them to buy larger numbers of any book so advertised.

Booksellers seldom have opportunities of displaying bills, let alone the smallest poster. They can, however, sometimes make effective use of show-cards.[1]

The cost of advertising. Inquiry is often made as to what percentage of the publisher's turnover is allocated to advertising. No English figures are available, but in the first edition of Kliemann's book three to four per cent on the cost of production is given as the average amount. He adds that, in addition, German retail booksellers spend about three per cent of their turnover on advertising. George H. Doran, the American publisher, claims to spend ten per cent of his gross income on 'promotion.' In England I should put the publisher's expenses on advertising at about six per cent of his turnover. When it is borne in mind that a large proportion of the British publisher's turnover consists of the sale of old books upon which little or nothing may be spent on advertising, it will be realized that on new books the percentage is extremely high. The gross turnover of a *7s. 6d.* novel, of which round about fifteen hundred copies are sold, may not exceed £250, and yet on such a book it is usual for a publisher to spend over

[1] In America there is a much more liberal use of window display material by booksellers, and the expenditure for coloured posters, lithographed cut-outs, and other display material is an important part of the publisher's advertising budget. — F. G.

£50 — in other words, over twenty per cent of his gross proceeds — despite the fact that on a first edition of fifteen hundred copies there may be no margin of profit at all. In proportion to the turnover involved, few commodities are so extensively advertised as new books. It is seldom, however, out of the heavily advertised books that the publisher makes his living, but out of books which continue to sell year after year with little or no expenditure on advertising. Such books, of which the reader may never have heard the name, are the backbone of many of the older houses. It would be safe to go farther and add that, if some of the old firms had to live on the profits made on their new books in any one year, they would indeed be in a sorry plight.

Taking it as a whole, book advertising is fairly well done. Criticism is easy; improvement difficult. We could, many of us, do wonderful things if we had not to ensure that the expenditure on advertising brought a commensurate return. In an earlier chapter I had occasion to point out that the insertion of a six-inch single column advertisement in any special position of the 'Daily Mail' would cost round about £50. How many books are there of which one such advertisement (or three such advertisements, if preferred) would sell £50 (or £150) worth? — and unless such advertising resulted in the sale of more than that, the books might as well have been given away. To be precise, it means that *one such advertisement ought to sell over a thousand copies of a book if the cost of selling the book by this means is not to exceed one shilling per copy.* Has it ever been known to do so?

Coöperative publicity. No chapter on the advertising of

books would be complete without a reference to the possibilities of coöperative publicity, which has long been a pet theme of mine. The idea was often mooted, but until it was taken up by the Society of Bookmen nothing happened. It ought perhaps to be explained that this society, whose membership is strictly limited to fifty, but consists of representatives of all those connected with the production and distribution of books, has as its one and only object the advancement of the knowledge and appreciation of good literature. In the course of its discussions it considered what more could be done by closer coöperation between authors, publishers, and booksellers to fulfil its object. A small group of us spent many hours, if not days, in drafting a scheme for coöperative advertising, which was ignominiously rejected as altogether too grandiose. Nothing daunted, we pursued our discussions, because, as some of us pointed out, if few were in favour of coöperative advertising, many, if not all, were in favour of securing those various forms of publicity which could be obtained with little or no expense by some such joint organization as we envisaged, but which could not be obtained by any of us as individuals. I remember giving as one illustration the case of a shipping company which produced, on its own initiative and at its own expense, a very attractive folder giving particulars of all the books about the countries to which their ships were travelling. The information included the names of the American as well as the British publishers, and the American as well as the British published prices. It was nobody's business to go to other shipping companies and suggest that they might be well advised to do some-

thing of the kind, and nobody's job to provide the necessary information if they agreed to do so. That was but one minor example of the kind of publicity which was being lost for the want of a little coöperative effort. There were found to be endless openings, and many organizations of one kind and another which could be roped in to assist with the preparation of brief bibliographies and in the encouragement of reading and the wider distribution of books.

Suffice it to say that the society invited delegates of the Authors' Society, Publishers' Association, Publishers' Circle, and the Associated Booksellers to meet some of us at lunch. The authors and booksellers were keen from the start. Publishers, or rather some of them, were much more cautious and hesitant, but at long last, after many discussions, all agreed to the inauguration of the National Book Council, whose objects are the promotion of book-reading and the wider distribution of books. Only a modest and tentative beginning has been made, but out of it some of us at any rate confidently hope much greater things will grow.

At present, no scheme of newspaper advertising is contemplated, for about that no unanimity has been obtained; but there is much else to be done, and many big movements have had yet smaller beginnings. There is a vast new reading public at our doors. The ground has been left untilled, and the formation of the National Book Council represents the first attempt at coöperation between authors, publishers, and booksellers to reach this new public. We shall be sowing seed which I cannot help feeling will in time

bear much refreshing fruit. In the cultivation of this untilled ground lies the hope of the future well-being of the book craft and all those connected with the production and distribution of books.

In regard to the future of book advertising, my own view, and I know that it is shared by few, is that the tendency will be to use the daily press both to arouse interest in books in general and to create a feeling of need for books and the recognition of their value in daily life; to concentrate advertisements of individual books in those papers, such as the weeklies, whose readers are definitely on the lookout for information about new books, and to develop the use of facsimile letters, prospectuses, etc., offering specific books to the public definitely interested in them. More of this latter form of advertising will, I believe, in the future be carried through by the booksellers working in closer coöperation than heretofore with the publishers. This, at any rate, is what a careful study of what can and cannot be accomplished by the different methods of advertising books would lead one to expect, but even before this book has been published some further and better method of promoting the sale of books may have been devised.

In view of the certainty that I shall be charged with not believing in advertising, just because I have ventured to point out some of its obvious limitations in connection with books, I should like to suggest that it would be equally truthful to charge me with not believing in ships because I refuse to shut my eyes to their limitations and their unsuitability as a means of land transport. I am, as a matter

of fact, a whole-hearted believer in advertising, but at the same time have come increasingly to realize that much of the experience gained about advertising in other fields has less application to books than is commonly supposed.

CHAPTER IX

COPYRIGHT AND 'RIGHTS'

BEFORE discussing the more important 'rights' in books, other than the right of publication in book form in the English language with which this work is principally concerned, it will be well to examine, however briefly, the two sources whence these 'rights' are derived.

The British Copyright Act of 1911 is the subject of several treatises, and it will therefore be sufficient for our purpose here to state that it defines copyright as: 'The sole right to produce or reproduce the work or any substantial part thereof in any material form whatsoever, to perform, or in the case of a lecture to deliver, the work or any substantial part thereof in public; if the work is unpublished, to publish the work or any substantial part thereof; and shall include the sole right . . .' to publish translations, dramatic versions, and to make films, etc., and secures these rights for the life of the author and fifty years after his death in every original literary work first published in His Majesty's dominions, without formality other than the delivery of a copy of the work to the Trustees of the British Museum within one month of publication.

Publication means 'the issue of copies of the work to the public,' and for the purposes of the Act 'first publication' is not prejudiced by simultaneous publication elsewhere, *not exceeding fourteen days* previously.

This last point is constantly overlooked by American

publishers, and sometimes by English literary agents who should know better. In fact, a careful examination would show that a startlingly large proportion of American books were not copyright (theoretically, at any rate) in Great Britain. I say 'theoretically' because, so long as British publishers continue to act (as they almost invariably do) on the assumption that all books in English by living writers are *ipso facto* copyright and the legality is never questioned by any one else, the works are for all practical purposes 'copyright.' None the less it would seem well to secure legal copyright by making publication in His Majesty's dominions *within fourteen days* of publication in the U.S.A. It should be noted that 'a colourable imitation of publication' is insufficient.

When the position is reversed, and it is a question of British publications in the U.S.A., the assumption is that the work is *not* copyright in the U.S.A. unless there is clear evidence to the contrary. This fact has some unfortunate results, as we shall see later.

The Berne Convention, which automatically secures, without formalities of any kind, copyright in all the countries of the signatories, is now so taken for granted that few people realize that this form of protection of literary property has only existed for about forty years. To be precise, the first Convention was signed in 1886; it was revised in 1896, and again in 1908.

Practically all the civilized nations of the world are signatories, the only important exceptions being Russia, the United States, certain of the South American Republics — which have their own convention — and China.

The Soviet authorities inherited the position from their Tsarist predecessors, whose example it is to be hoped they will not follow indefinitely. The United States, at present debarred from signing by their insistence upon local manufacture as a condition of copyright, have a new bill under consideration which is so drafted as to enable them to signify their adherence to the Convention.

Even without these countries, the Convention covers nine hundred and thirty-five million people. Its terms are of such importance, and are so little known amongst authors, that I give below the particulars of the Blue Book which contains the official English version.[1]

The 1908 revision, amongst other changes, brought translations into line with original works, whereas under the earlier Conventions translation rights in any language fall into the *domain publique* if no translation in that language is published within ten years of publication in the country of origin. Although acceptance of the revisions was optional, every member eventually ratified the 1908 Convention. Certain countries, however, did so with minor reservations, and in particular Greece, Holland, Italy, and Japan made this ten-year reservation regarding translation rights.

The extent and duration of the copyright protection enjoyed in each country is whatever is accorded to its own authors by the country where the protection is being used, provided that in no case shall the duration exceed that granted to authors in the country of origin. 'The country

[1] Correspondence respecting the Revised Convention of Berne, Misc. No. 2 (1909), Cd. 4467. (H. M. Stationery Office.)

of origin' is defined as, 'for unpublished works, the country to which the author belongs; for published works, the country of first publication'; and for works published simultaneously in several countries within the Union (as also in countries without the Union) the Unionist country granting the shortest term of protection.

Many countries, including France and Great Britain, give protection for fifty years after the author's death (subject, in the case of Great Britain, to certain restrictions after the lapse of twenty-five years); some give thirty years.

Of the many rights enjoyed by British authors under both the British Copyright Act of 1911 and the Berne Convention, the first to call for consideration here are serial rights.

Serial rights may theoretically exist in all publications, but in practice only a small proportion of the thousands of new books issued each year are serialized; similarly, by no means all the serials that appear in newspapers and magazines are published in book form. The best books do not necessarily make the best serials, and *vice versa*. In fact, it is safe to say that the best serials are specially written for that purpose, in which case care can be taken to ensure that each instalment has a satisfactory 'curtain,' and a satisfactory 'curtain' from an editor's point of view is one that compels the reader to buy the next issue of the paper or magazine. Apart from novels, few books, other than personal reminiscences of well-known people, lend themselves to serial issue *in extenso* prior to book publication. (The 'reminiscences' may take any form, and would, of course,

include personal stories of travel or exploration; to be 'well known' is not necessarily to be favourably known.) On the other hand, *parts* of many books can first be used as articles.

Serialization takes time, and even though a story may be adapted for the purpose, the author may not be willing to defer publication in book form to take advantage of the fact. Most newspapers and magazines book up their serials a long way ahead, and to be successful in placing serial rights on any large scale it is necessary to have exact knowledge of such openings as exist at any given moment. Other factors being equal, the more time there is in which to place the rights the greater likelihood there is of doing so to advantage.

In selling serial rights, it is particularly important to define the rights that are being offered. Occasionally it is possible to get a favourable offer for the world serial rights; more usually the serial rights for individual countries or states are sold separately. Again, in most cases, all that is sold is the 'first serial rights' or the 'single serial use' in a given paper or periodical, thus leaving the possibility of securing a further return from the second serial rights. These second rights are sometimes purchased for 'syndication'; that is to say, a firm buys the remaining serial rights for a lump sum and makes its profit by farming them out to a number of small papers, none of which could afford to buy even the second serial rights for its own exclusive use. In addition to selling these rights to the smaller provincial papers in the United Kingdom, a firm of this kind would expect to pick up £10 here and £15 there in such places as, let us say, Ceylon, Tasmania, or the North or South Is-

lands of New Zealand, because most of the dominion papers run serials.

Apart from knowledge of openings, to which reference has been made, there is a large element of luck in placing serials right. An unexpected gap between two serials may leave an editor particularly anxious to secure another in a hurry — at such a moment whatever comes his way will receive unusually favourable consideration — unusual because at most times the supply greatly exceeds the demand.

The prices paid for serial rights vary enormously. Big figures are obtained by popular novelists or people much in the public eye. The fiction editor of a popular magazine has often to choose between a story totally unsuitable for serialization by an author with a big name and a first-rate serial at a quarter the price by an unknown writer. In such cases the 'name' is almost invariably selected. I recall one occasion when a famous novelist, who had failed after much effort to place the serial rights in his new novel, offered the book rights to a publisher on the condition that he bought the serial rights. The author was satisfied that the serial rights could *not* be otherwise sold. The novel was over 150,000 words in length and there was very little action in it. The publisher accepted the offer provided he had *carte blanche* to blue pencil for serial purposes, to which stipulation the author readily agreed. A competent journalist was instructed to cut out more than half the book and leave nothing that was not strictly relevant to the thread of the story. In this form, much to the author's surprise, the publisher found an editor willing to pay £400 for its serial use, largely for the sake of the author's name.

This preference of 'names' to quality or suitability in selecting serials is being overdone and will in the long run bring its own nemesis.

Far and away the best prices for serial stories or series of articles are paid by American papers, *if* you are in the happy position of being able to supply exactly what they require. It is well worth while for English authors to study their requirements, for the rewards of compliance are substantial.

The claim that previous serialization helps the sale in book form can seldom be substantiated. On the other hand, neither can the statement that serialization has proved prejudicial. On balance it probably does more harm than good to a book, but any slight disadvantage is much more than compensated by the financial benefits derived by the author.

The American book rights (except in the case of the few favoured authors whose books will unquestionably be separately printed on both sides) are usually best handled by the British publisher. Some of the reasons for this were mentioned in the chapter on Agreements.

American copyright[1] in a British book can at present (1926) only be secured by its complete manufacture in the States within sixty (or, subject to the deposit of a copy of the English edition at Washington, sixty plus one hundred and twenty) days of publication in Great Britain. In the case of a book already produced or in process of production

[1] The term is twenty-eight years with option of renewal for a further twenty-eight years; but application for renewal must be made by the copyright owner within the year prior to the expiration of the original term.

over here, this necessitates, and in other instances generally involves, dual typesetting and dual printing, which is only worth while or practicable with a small proportion of the new books published. Naturally the British publisher endeavours to make an arrangement of this kind wherever possible, particularly in cases where there is any likelihood of the work being pirated; but the number of new books so printed (apart from those of the favoured few whose case we are not considering) is exceedingly small. For every other kind of arrangement for publication in the States, whether it be the sale of a set of electroplates or stereoplates, the supply of an edition in sheets or of bound copies with the American publisher's imprint, the British publisher *must* be called in.

As one or other of these alternatives is eventually adopted in the case of the greater number of ordinary books, the effect of any reservation of the American rights by the author is, in most cases, merely to make it more difficult, if not impossible, for the publisher to arrange a satisfactory deal when he is eventually asked to negotiate. He is obviously in a better position to do well for the author if he controls the rights from the start. But there is another important factor particularly applicable to new authors or works on a new subject. American publishers visiting London are invariably pressed for time; they want to secure the best material available, but have limited moments or hours in which to examine it. They may listen with attention to the eloquence of authors or authors' agents anxious to sell manuscripts, but it will not carry the conviction of a fellow publisher's remark, 'Here are our readers' reports;

we are taking the book.' There is a simple and effective test. How often will an American publisher buy a book by an unknown author from that author or a literary agent without either reading it or having it read? Never! On the other hand, many an American publisher's big successes have been bought solely on the strength of a British publisher's recommendation. It happens constantly with some British publishers in whose judgment American publishers have learnt to place reliance. Is that of no value to the unknown author? Again, certain publishers have such a high reputation for books on particular subjects that their imprint on any book in that field will at once render the rights easily marketable in the States (or *vice versa*). Would not good will of that kind be rated and rewarded highly in any other business or walk of life?

To choose the right American publisher is of paramount importance, and in making his selection the British publisher will probably be guided by just those reasons which should influence every author in the original placing of his manuscript.

First should come financial stability (many authors think about this last, if they think about it at all; but to enter into an agreement with a firm that does not pay its royalties is much worse than useless).

Second, the quality of the publisher's list (most publishers tend to specialize to some extent, and it is nearly always wise to choose a firm noted for the kind of a book you have to sell).

Third, the strength of the publisher's selling organization (this would often exclude the very small or new firms).

Fourth, the desirability of securing a publisher likely to take a personal interest in the work (this would sometimes exclude the very biggest firms).

Other less ponderable factors would influence a publisher's final decision, such as his previous experience with the various possible American firms, etc., but, having made his selection, a publisher would realize the advantages of abiding by it for future work by the same author. The advantages of remaining loyal to one publisher are numerous; the disadvantages few. In the same list each book by an author can be made to advertise its fellow. Just as an individual lump of hot coal will soon cease to give out heat, whereas a dozen pieces will maintain a fire, so the individual book will lose momentum, whereas a dozen by the same author in the same publisher's hands will collectively continue to sell. A group of books can be given attention and publicity in many ways denied to a single book. A librarian or a bookseller ordering an author's books may easily overlook some of them if they are spread over a dozen publishers' lists, but is unlikely to do so if they are concentrated in one. Fortunately these very obvious facts are becoming increasingly recognized by authors and, let it be added, by literary agents, because, despite their present protestations of virtue in this respect, they were largely responsible for authors moving from publisher to publisher for the sake of some immediate advantage such as a slightly higher 'advance,' regardless of the permanent disadvantage to their clients.

The American market may sometimes prove more important than the home market because, owing to the greater population in the States, a book that does 'catch on' sells much more largely over there. As a rule, there are no half-measures about it. The American book-buying

public appears to be more easily led than ours, and to exercise less independent judgment. The herd instinct carries all before it, and books that run counter to that instinct stand a much poorer chance of being read in America than in Great Britain. An American publisher, who had gone out of his way to persuade Mr. Bertrand Russell to write a book summarizing Socialism, Syndicalism, and Anarchism, showed not the slightest hesitation about treating the agreement with him as 'a scrap of paper' when Mr. Russell became temporarily unpopular and went to prison for a technical offence under 'Dora,' and the firm that eventually took the book ('Roads to Freedom') felt it expedient to call it 'Proposed Roads to Freedom,' to avoid scaring the American public. To-day the American publishers who were afraid to publish 'Roads to Freedom' (and have ever since regretted their lack of courage) are clamouring for the 'privilege' of publishing for Mr. Russell. In acting as they did, the publishers merely reflected the attitude of the public for which they cater. You cannot have the advantages of American conditions without the corresponding disadvantages. There is a sense in which publishing is both much more and much less of a gamble over there than with us.

'Working expenses' are even greater, and it is therefore comparatively seldom that the scale of royalties paid by American publishers starts at more than ten per cent for unknown or lesser known writers, or at more than fifteen per cent for the better known, and it practically never rises above twenty per cent, however large the scale.

Royalties are often paid on books not legally copyright

in the U.S.A., but in that case ten per cent is usually the limit; such an arrangement would probably be operative if, as often happens, the British publisher supplied a set of electroplates or stereoplates to enable the book to be printed in the States without the heavy expense of dual typesetting being incurred, or if the American publisher decided to print the book after having imported it.

The importation of 'editions,' whether forming part of the English edition or separately printed, is the method most usually adopted by American publishers in all cases where a large sale is improbable. Some firms specialize in importations of this kind; others seldom, if ever, take a book if they do not feel it is worth while to print and copyright it. It is the British publisher's business to know the suitable firms to approach.

Piracy. We have seen that, unless printed in the U.S.A. within the specified time, British literary property is at the mercy of any one who cares to print it in the States.[1]

One of the worst examples of piracy was in connection with the work of Freud. A hitherto unknown American concern extracted chunks (not necessarily complete chapters) from our publication, 'The Interpretation of Dreams,' translated by Dr. Brill, mixed them with instalments of at any rate one other work by Freud (published by Heinemann), and announced it under another title, not only as a

[1] The important new copyright bill mentioned by the author on page 244 is now before Congress strongly endorsed by the publishers and authors of America. If this bill passes, the work of foreign authors will receive full and automatic protection in the United States. The bill ensures copyright in literary property for the life of the author and a period of fifty years after his death. — F. G.

new book by Freud, but as an 'authorized translation' by Dr. Eder, who, like Freud, knew nothing about it — and, still more unbelievable, this remarkable publisher claimed copyright in the book!

The firm is now out of business. We certainly contributed to their troubles.

But, once again, let it be emphasized, piracy is the exception, not the rule; and none of the many excellent firms of American publishers, whose names are so well known and respected, is ever guilty of taking literary property by living authors without making proper arrangements with whoever would be the copyright owner were America a signatory to the Berne Convention, as she may be within a few months of the time this book is published.

Translation rights automatically exist in the case of all countries which are signatories to the Berne Convention, though, as we have seen, the duration of the rights may vary. The absence of such rights does not promote the publication of translations, as might be supposed. On the contrary, where any one may publish a translation without permission, it is usually worth nobody's while to run the risk of doing so. The risk in such a case is threefold, because there is not only the uncertainty of whether the translation will sell, but the possibility that some competitor may simultaneously be preparing one, and the certainty that competing editions will be published, if by any chance the venture proves successful.

The value of the 'rights' should theoretically bear some relationship to the number of readers of the language into which a work is being translated; in practice this is seldom

the case. Other factors have greater importance. The Germans, the Dutch, the Swedes, the Danes, and the Norwegians are much more interested in translations of the work of English authors than are the peoples of any of the Latin countries. Hence the greater difficulty in placing French, Italian, and Spanish rights, and the poor prices that are often offered for them.

Translation rights embrace serial as well as book rights; it is thus important that there should be no ambiguity as to what rights are being offered or purchased. Many foreign newspapers and periodicals make use of translations as 'feuilletons,' and the fact that 'rights' have been secured for this purpose does not necessarily secure publication in book form. Again, translators often buy translation rights as a speculation, hoping to profit by their resale after the translation has been completed. Should such a translator prove unsuccessful in finding a publisher, the English author is in the unhappy position of having parted with his or her rights without ensuring that publication will ever take place.

It is usually desirable, therefore, that the contract for the sale of translation rights should be with a publisher, not with a private individual, and essential that it should state clearly whether both serial and book rights are being conveyed.

Most authors will rightly regard actual publication as of the essence of the contract, in which case it is wise to provide for the rights automatically reverting if publication does not take place within a prescribed period. If the author has sufficient linguistic ability to check the quality

of the translation, provision may be made for it to be submitted to him. It may also be wise to place on record that there shall be no abridgment without the author's written consent.

When we come to the important question of terms, it is necessary to treat each country separately. Taking it as a whole, the most important market for translations of English literary works is Germany.

German rights. Until recently a lump-sum payment was regarded as a satisfactory consideration, and to the *inexperienced* this may still be the best method. But there is no longer any difficulty about arranging contracts upon a royalty basis. There are, however, many pitfalls for the unwary. The number of publishers in Germany is legion, and, as we have seen in the chapter on Agreements, an unfavourable contract with a good firm is at all times to be preferred to a favourable contract with an unstable one. An English publisher who is a member of the Börsenverein is in a position to ascertain the status of any German firm in a way that no author or agent can do, and as a recipient of the daily trade paper, the 'Börsenblatt,' the circulation of which is rigidly restricted to members, has unique opportunities of gauging German publishers' requirements. (Points of this kind are consistently overlooked or ignored by the Authors' Society in its enthusiasm for limiting the British publisher's functions.)

The amount of royalty will vary according to the kind of book, but there is an easy way of arriving at what is equitable. Three questions have to be asked:

(1) What is the probable sale (or, alternatively, what is the size of the first edition to be)?

(2) What would be a fair royalty in England under similar circumstances?
(3) What is the translation likely to cost?

It is obvious that the cost of translation must in effect be deducted from the royalty, because, if the royalty be a fair one, it is impossible for the publisher to pay a translator *in addition*. To put the matter in the converse way, it will not be disputed that if a publisher can afford to pay a translator *in addition* to any given royalty, he is in a position to pay a higher royalty, if there is no translator to pay.

The cost of translation must therefore be taken into consideration in assessing the amount of the royalty. One method of doing so is to halve or otherwise divide the royalty until the translator's fee has been covered; another is to accept a lump sum for the first '*x*' copies and the full royalty thereafter.

The agreement should in any case provide for half yearly accounts, and show clearly whether the royalty is payable on the full published price of the cloth-bound as well as of the paper-bound (*broschierte*) copies. Many German publishers calculate all their royalties on the published price of the paper-bound edition. At one time this was unimportant, as the bulk of the sales were in that form, but with the ever-increasing tendency to use cloth binding the difference may be considerable.

It may be well to interpolate here that all questions not specifically settled in a publishing contract entered into in Germany are governed by the German law[1] regulating

[1] Gesetz über das Verlagsrecht vom 19. Juni, 1901 (vol. 1704 in the Reclam Bibliothek).

publishing; thus, for example, even if no mention of either matter is made in the agreement, the author is entitled after the lapse of twenty years (*vide* §2) to include any of his writings in a collected edition, and the publisher is entitled (*vide* § 6) to use up to five per cent of the edition as 'free copies.' There is much in the Act of great interest to British authors and publishers, but it would take us beyond the scope of this book to examine it.

The Danish and Norwegian rights are almost invariably sold together, whether it be to a Danish or to a Norwegian publisher. It is sometimes possible to secure a royalty arrangement, but a lump-sum payment is more usual. Of necessity, owing to the smallness of the combined populations of these countries, the amount that can be expected is not very substantial. Whatever the fee, it should be in respect of a definite number of copies, e.g., the first three thousand copies sold. This secures the right to further payments if the translation proves unexpectedly successful.

The Swedish rights usually bring in about the same as, if not a little more than, the Danish-Norwegian rights, because there is a substantial sale for Swedish books in Finland as well as in Sweden. Some Swedish publishers make a point of consulting their Finnish agents or collaborators before deciding upon the purchase of any rights. Speaking generally, the sale of the Swedish rights indicates a probable demand for the Danish-Norwegian rights, and *vice versa*, because the requirements of all three countries are very much alike.

The Dutch rights in any literary work that proves particularly successful in England are readily marketable; this is

surprising in view of the fact that every second person in Holland knows English, if not two or three other languages. The Dutch East Indies provide an additional market for the Dutch translations, and the amount paid for these rights, though inconsiderable, is often as much as for the Danish-Norwegian rights. Here again, the payment should cover a prescribed number of copies.

When we turn to the *French translation rights* we are confronted with more difficult conditions. French publishers are by no means modest in their valuations of translation rights in their own publications (their requirements are often fantastic, particularly if they think an American firm is interested in them), but they are timidity itself when it comes to embarking upon French translations of English works let alone making any substantial payment for the rights. As in the case of Germany, it is often possible to arrange for a royalty basis, but if that is done, an advance payment and a provision that it shall be forfeited if publication does not take place within a prescribed time are essentials.

The Spanish rights are a very uncertain quantity. If you can interest a Spanish publisher sufficiently to induce him to answer correspondence, you will probably be rewarded with about 500 pesetas (= £20).

The Italian translation rights are usually of still less value. Italian publishers seem to be more ready to correspond about, but less willing to pay for, translation rights than their Spanish confrères.

The Japanese translation rights ought to be more valuable than they are. Unfortunately, despite the Berne Conven-

tion, 'pirated' editions are constantly published. When payment is forthcoming, it is seldom that more than £10 to £15 is obtained.

Other translation rights can be placed from time to time, but the amounts received do not justify devoting space to each country separately.

Dramatic, Cinema, and other Rights

Dramatic rights seldom concern the book publisher. There are agents who specialize in the placing of them and the Authors' Society (through its dramatic subcommittee) is in a position to give authors expert advice.

The film rights are in a slightly different position. They are often excluded from the book publisher's contract, but the fact remains that they are usually unsaleable until the book is published. In other words, in the case of an unknown writer it is the publisher's expenditure that renders these rights marketable. It may easily happen that a publisher, in losing heavily over the publication of a first novel, may give substantial value to the film rights.[1] But if a publisher ventured to suggest that in such circumstances it would not be inequitable were he to have some quite modest share in this result of his enterprise, he would probably be denounced in no measured terms in the columns of the 'Author.'

The publication of novels by unknown writers is often exceedingly speculative, and there would seem to be no

[1] And also, according to Mr. Michael Joseph, the well-known literary agent, 'help an author enormously to place his short stories and journalistic work, and probably enable him to get better prices' (*vide T.P.'s Weekly*, November 21, 1925).

good reason why an author, who chose to do so, should not offer a publisher, by way of additional inducement to take the risk, an interest in the film rights which, but for publication, would remain unmarketable. At any rate the point would seem to deserve consideration. 'Pictures' soon get out of date. The right granted should therefore be to make *one* picture only, and there should be a time-limit in the contract.

Broadcasting rights may be a source of direct revenue and in addition have value as publicity. The fees obtainable are not as yet fully standardized and vary with the length of the selection and the publicity value of the author's name.

Anthologies, compilations, musical settings, etc. With the dictum laid down by the Authors' Society that any one wanting literary material should pay for it, all who have given thought to the matter are bound to agree, at any rate in theory. There would seem to be no more excuse for any man 'cadging' for material with which to fill a book (out of which profit is to be derived) than for furniture with which to fill his house. The question is thus merely one of deciding what fee is equitable. Each case has to be judged on its own merits; the publisher is usually in a position to gauge what is fair. There is, in most cases, a definite limit to what an anthology-maker can afford to pay for copyright material, and the effect of asking excessive fees is to decrease, not increase, the revenue from this source.

There are, for example, instances where the condition has been laid down that no work controlled by a particular agent should be included, because that agent was known to be exorbitant in his demands. If his policy was to keep his

clients' work out of anthologies, he succeeded admirably. But many a poet receives more collectively for the right to use individual poems than from the royalties on the sale of his works, and welcomes the attention of the anthology-maker.

Prose compilations are in greater favour in America than in England, judging by the number of applications received for the use of copyright matter. In such cases the fee usually bears a fairly definite ratio to the length of the extract.

The relative importance of words and music in the case of a musical setting may be a difficult question to decide. Composers are apt to feel that a nominal fee to the author meets the case, whereas authors may claim as much as a half-share in the composer's royalty as their proper due. Each case has to be examined individually, and a settlement arrived at somewhere between these two extremes.

The remuneration claimed by publishers for the placing of rights is a subject frequently mentioned in the 'Author.' It is almost invariably discussed with a complete disregard of the varying circumstances of the individual cases. Any commission in excess of ten per cent is *ipso facto* dismissed as extortionate, whereas a charge of twenty per cent in some cases might be as much an underpayment as a commission of ten per cent on others (e.g., some large and easily effected transaction) might be excessive. Presumably the remuneration should under normal circumstances bear some relation to the service rendered and the labour involved.[1] It seems strange to have to suggest anything so

[1] It is, perhaps, pertinent to point out that the value of the subsidiary rights which the publisher sells is, in part, created by the pri-

obvious, but the Authors' Society is as apt to overlook this point to-day as were some publishers in the past. An amusing indication of the frame of mind engendered by an over-diligent reading of the 'Author' is afforded by a recent experience of my own, when a member of the Society solemnly assured me that one shilling (which, by the way, she has not yet paid) was 'ample' reward for writing three letters and spending some time on the telephone to secure her a fee which but for my initiative would not have come her way. I had been rash enough to suggest half a guinea!

The Literary Agent

As for the question (frequently put to publishers) whether I believe in literary agents, I always feel inclined to reply as I should were I asked if I 'believed' in spectacles: 'Yes, if you need them and can be quite sure of getting the right kind.'

To a few authors an agent is indispensable; to some others a great convenience; but to the majority unnecessary. This is clearly demonstrated by the indisputable fact that most publishing contracts have always been, and still are, made direct between the author and publisher without the intervention of any middleman.[1] Literary agents are a comparatively recent innovation, and it is interesting to

mary success of the book, due, in some measure at least, to his own investment of time, energy, money — and if it is not claiming too much, intelligence. He has, therefore, a reasonable claim to some percentage of participation, in addition to the percentage of remuneration for the selling act — to which an agent would be entitled. — F. G.

[1] This may not be true of individual firms, but of the 12,000 books published in any one year nowhere near 6000 are placed by agents.

note in passing that the status they enjoy in Great Britain has not been accorded to them in any other country.[1]

There are, of course, agents of all kinds — the good, the bad, the indifferent; the lordly agent who treats publishers (and his less important clients) as if they were particularly tiresome little schoolboys; his humble confrère who regards a brief moment in a publisher's presence as an unparalleled honour; the reasonably efficient, and the hopelessly inefficient. For this profitable occupation no qualifications seem to be required. I know of only one agent who has had actual publishing or bookselling experience, and is adequately informed about such vital matters as the cost of production, advertising, etc. It is rare to find one with a thorough knowledge of any foreign language or with continental experience, though they mostly claim to be experts in dealing with translation rights. In point of fact, most of them are out of their depth if they attempt to handle anything but fiction, memoirs, or popular works with a wide appeal, and some of them are honest enough to admit that fact.

Had the placing of manuscripts for publication in book form remained their principal activity, their business would probably have declined as rapidly as it grew, because the prejudice against unnecessary intermediaries is fairly general, and because the agent's supposed duty of protecting the 'innocent' author from the 'wicked' publisher has long since been assumed by the authors' own trade union,

[1] Of three hundred and four current books listed in the Holiday Bulletins of Houghton Mifflin Company for 1926, nineteen, or about six per cent, came through agents. — F. G.

the Authors' Society, whose function it obviously is. (It is amusing to observe that the question of protecting the author from his supposed protector — the literary agent — is now frequently discussed in the columns of the 'Author.')

But with the advent of new 'rights' of many kinds, the management of literary property has become a much more complicated and technical business. This has greatly strengthened the agents' position and made their services of real value to some authors. Whilst it is quite true that some agents are better than some publishers in placing subsidiary 'rights' of one kind or another, it must not be forgotten that some publishers are better than many agents at so doing.

For many authors to-day, the right of publication in book form is by no means the most important direct source of income. Film, serial, dramatic, or other rights may yield far more, and it is in these directions that an agent may prove particularly helpful. At the same time it must not be overlooked that, indirectly, book publication is still of paramount importance. The author's prestige — which, translated into cash, means the price his articles or short stories will command — is nearly always dependent upon the reputation made by his books. This fact is becoming increasingly recognized by authors.

In placing book rights, agents tend to turn first to the big fiction publishers (who are, of course, their chief clients), and, failing them, to the unimaginative or new publisher bent on building up a list in haste. Whether this is in the interests of authors, or whether the best publishing is done

by either class of firm, is, to say the least of it, doubtful; but that agents should give them first consideration is perhaps inevitable. In both cases the decision is likely to be based purely upon commercial considerations; the intrinsic merits of the manuscripts will not be examined too closely. The specialist and the literary publisher, on the other hand, are usually more independent. They are more fastidious in their selection of manuscripts, and not so ready to buy 'blindly.' Nor have they any need to do so, because such firms receive so many manuscripts direct from authors. Furthermore, their reputation probably rests upon the maintenance of a very high standard.

Authors employing agents should remember that some of the best publishers avoid doing business with certain agents and *vice versa;* otherwise they may find (too late) that the most likely firm to take their work has never been approached. It would also be well for authors to bear in mind that a publisher may be able and willing to grant concessions to an individual which fear of creating a precedent would deter him from granting to an agent. This at once introduces a certain rigidity into negotiations with agents.

One other point deserves mention because it is a frequent cause of friction. Its importance has been recognized by the one agent with publishing experience, and I cannot do better than quote his words:

> A publisher likes to have his contracts as nearly uniform as possible, for this simplifies his handling of a book. A certain routine is usually established in regard to publishing a book, and if there are no special points to be observed, the process of production and selling will go along automatically in a well-

ordered office; but confusion is apt to occur if the publisher has to stop constantly and refer to his contract to see whether he has the right to do this or that. Book-keeping is also simplified and mistakes are less likely to occur if the contract is on standard lines.[1]

It would certainly help matters considerably were agents to take this to heart.

[1] *The Commercial Side of Literature*, by Michael Joseph.

CHAPTER X

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE BUSINESS

THE preceding chapters have left untouched a number of interesting questions and much of the day-to-day routine work of a publisher. I propose here to repair some of these omissions. The efficiency or inefficiency of all the activities previously described depends largely upon the coördination of the various departments. The infinite detail makes this a difficult task even where the utmost good will prevails, and a quite impossible one without it. A policy of water-tight compartments is fatal in a publisher's office, because almost everything decided or done in one department has some bearing upon the work of another. The more understanding there is among a publisher's employees of the other fellow's job, the more coöperation there will be and the fewer mistakes. For this reason, if for no other, it has always seemed to me a wise policy to take pains to ensure that all employees should know as much as practicable about the business as a whole, as well as the exact bearing of their work upon that of the other departments. Of course, the larger the staff, the more difficult this is to achieve.

Before the war, employees in the book trade were for the most part seriously underpaid, and the labour troubles encountered thereafter were an almost inevitable reaction. Few firms had the decency, or shall we say far-sightedness? to grant wage increases *pari passu* with the rise in the cost

of living; many resisted the most modest demands until they found themselves coerced. Those times are gone, never, I hope, to return. To-day a different spirit prevails. It is generally agreed that a reasonably high standard should prevail, and that so far as practicable the more responsible employees should feel a direct interest in the prosperity of their respective firms. This is the more important because there are few highly paid posts in the book trade. The largest firms may have two or three managerial[1] positions; the smaller none, or at most one. A successful publisher's manager is usually tempted to start in business for himself; in any case, publishing profits are usually too precarious to justify high salaries; and, whatever he paid, the publisher who had his whole heart in his profession would want to do the lion's share of the managing himself.

Finance. It is a commonplace that the financial side of a business is of paramount importance, but it is one that is even more apt to be overlooked in a publishing house than elsewhere. The temptations to do so are very great. It is so easy, if your inclinations prompt you to publish a particular book, either to ignore altogether or to judge too optimistically its financial prospects. The danger inherent in giving the benefit of the doubt to every book in which you are personally interested has perpetually to be guarded against. But, apart altogether from these considerations, there is the equally important question of the general basis upon which the business is to be run. In the past, and to a

[1] A 'manager' in the English sense is unknown in American offices. The publishers themselves usually do the work of both publishers and manager.

lesser extent the practice still persists to-day, it was customary for publishers to rely very largely upon extended credit obtained from stationers, printers, and bookbinders to finance their undertakings. It was a thoroughly evil system for many reasons, but particularly because of the way in which it bolstered up inefficient and sometimes quite insolvent firms, with the result that, when the final and inevitable crash came, the losses sustained by all concerned, and authors in particular, were much greater than would otherwise have been the case. The printer and bookbinder, if they held any considerable stock upon which they could claim a lien, might in such cases conceivably recover something from the wreck, and in any case they probably charged sufficienty high prices to cover the risk; but the unfortunate author was almost invariably an unsecured creditor to whom little or nothing was forthcoming. During the war period it became impossible for extended credit to be continued, and it is to be hoped that publishers as a whole will never again desire or be able to depend so largely upon stationers, printers, and bookbinders for the capital with which to run their businesses. The firms that can pay promptly for their requirements are obviously likely to get the best service, but if publishers are to be in a position to do this without outside assistance, they must, especially in the case of growing firms, place painfully sharp limitations upon the drawing out of such profits as are made. As we have been officially reminded recently, 'the soundest method of trade — and this applies to individuals, companies, and combines — is to trade on one's own resources and not on borrowings.'

Authors are directly interested in the financial stability of publishers, though it is surprising sometimes how little thought they appear to give to it.

Authors' accounts. The efficiency with which these accounts are prepared varies enormously from business to business. There are alternative methods of securing the necessary figures of sales. The most rapid and the simplest is to take the number printed, to deduct from it the stock on hand and the number distributed free to the author and to the press, and to treat the balance as sold. The alternative and more reliable method is to analyse all the sales; that is to say, to go through each invoice separately and post each transaction to a sales analysis book, in which, under the title of the work, are entered exact particulars of every copy sold. How many publishers adopt this method I do not know. It is a most laborious task, but has many advantages. It provides a double check, because one can easily ensure that no mistakes have been made by the simple process of adding to the sales shown in the analysis the stock on hand and the number given away, and see that the total tallies with the number printed. Furthermore, it enables the publisher to tell at a glance who have proved the best customers for any particular book.

Whichever system is adopted, it seems to me that an author is entitled to 'stock accounts.' The Authors' Society is wisely pressing for this, but has foolishly coupled with it the demand for half-yearly accounts, which shows a lamentable ignorance of the actual working of a publisher's office. The stock account, to have any real value, must be based upon actual stock-taking figures, and no publisher

takes stock more than once a year.[1] (It is quite bad enough that for one day in the year his entire business should be brought to a standstill.) On the other hand, authors very naturally do not want to be kept waiting unnecessarily for payment, and where any sum over £10 is involved an interim account is a reasonable request. It should, however, be clearly understood that it *is* an interim account, and it should not be given the same status as an account based upon stock-taking figures. In pressing for accounts to be rendered within an unduly brief period after the closing of the year to which they refer, the Authors' Society overlooks that the granting of the demand would probably preclude the checking of the authors' account with the stock-taking figures.

In connection with the preparation of authors' accounts, a card-index summary of agreements is essential. The more standardized the agreement forms are, the more easy the work becomes. At the best, the amount of detail involved is usually out of all proportion to the turnover. Just as I think it is in the publishers' interests to see in what way they can reduce booksellers' overhead charges, so I believe that if the Authors' Society were wise, it would see what steps could be taken (without impairing efficiency) to reduce the appalling amount of clerical work which authors' requirements inflict upon publishers. It is obvious that the more a publisher spends on unnecessary overhead, the less margin he has for either the author or himself.

[1] In America semi-annual statements are the rule except for slow-moving titles, and stock counts are not infrequently taken quarterly. All authors' accounts should be rendered within sixty days thereafter. — F. G.

An example of such economy, in the case of a book that has had its day, is to compound the royalty on the balance of the stock by a single cash payment appropriate to the circumstances. It is the common-sense and practical way of saving the clerical labour entailed in the rendering of innumerable further small accounts; but no doubt theoretical objections can be found to it.

Stock-taking is a much more complicated process than authors are apt to realize. The stock actually held at a publisher's office generally represents a fraction of the whole, though it will probably include some copies of every book in his list. The balance may be distributed over all parts of the kingdom. The publisher's staff has, therefore, not only to count the stock in the publisher's actual possession, but also to obtain reports from all the printers and binders who hold stock for him. These reports have to be carefully checked with the publisher's own records. It is very rarely that they tally. Long lists of queries go back to the printers and binders, and it may be weeks before all the figures are finally adjusted and ready to enter in the publisher's stock-book.[1]

Upon the *valuation of stock, plant, and copyrights* depends the solvency of a publishing business. It is the easiest thing in the world to show profits if you care to deceive yourself as to the value of the stock on hand. The standards applicable to other businesses are not applicable to publishing. Every book venture would show a profit if the

[1] It is less important that minute errors be corrected than that reports be issued promptly and corrected on the next return. The American publisher with six offices and thirty-five or forty depositories would never be through checking discrepancies, but with reports checked by binders' reports there can be no final permanent error. — F. G.

stock left on hand were worth cost. There would indeed be little difficulty were it sufficient to write off ten per cent or even twenty per cent from cost. But, alas! few books that have ceased to sell are worth anything approaching cost, and many have no value except for pulping. If the book is not a steady and substantial seller, the only safe plan is to face the question what the stock is certain to realize as a remainder; and, in the case of a steady seller, it is essential to make sure that the stock is not in excess of the requirements of, say, the next three years, before accepting cost as a proper valuation. Practically all publishers agree about the need for drastic depreciation; nearly all impress upon you that they themselves see to it that their own stock is adequately written down; but the fact remains that nearly all publishers deceive themselves — often quite unconsciously — and overvalue their stock. Few publishers would be able to look their profit and loss account in the face if they dealt really adequately with depreciation. This sounds like a very sweeping statement, but there is plenty of evidence to support it. I have in one connection or another been called upon to examine scores of publishers' accounts — it is true that they were many of them firms that had got into difficulties — and I have never found a single instance where the stock was not hopelessly and fantastically overvalued. But there is no need to confine ourselves to private information. The records at Somerset House will show any one interested what an amazingly large proportion of the oldest and most esteemed publishing houses have at some period of their existence been reconstructed in some way or other in order to write down their capital

and reduce their valuation of stock, plant, or copyrights, which they found themselves unable to do by any less drastic means. There are few publishers who would not be thankful to turn their entire stock into cash at the figure at which it appears in their balance-sheet, and if that is so, it is quite certainly overvalued. Apart altogether from other considerations, there are two points which are almost invariably overlooked when valuing stock:

(1) The heavy cost of realization: if the publisher does not receive considerably more than the figure at which the stock is valued, he will be seriously at a loss by the time it is turned into cash.

(2) The author's interest in the stock: even if it cost nothing to dispose of the books, the publisher would be out of pocket by the amount of the author's royalty if they merely fetched the price at which they were valued. In the case of profit-sharing books, the author's interest may be fifty per cent.

The extent to which publishers deceive themselves varies greatly, but the most remarkable case I ever encountered was that of a diary publisher long since deceased, who solemnly valued at cost diaries for past years! This sounds incredible, but it is probable that an examination of many publishers' valuation books would disclose some examples which, though less obvious, were equally wide of the mark. There have even been cases of publishers who wrote up the value of their stock when they found the results of the year's trading were not entirely to their liking.

When we turn to the value of plant, which, by the way, is not plant in the income-tax sense, because in a publishing business it refers merely to moulds, stereoplates, electro-

plates, and blocks, there is only one safe rule, and that is to get the valuation onto a metal basis as rapidly as possible. By a metal basis I mean, of course, what the plates, etc., will fetch for melting. In the case of plates of works of a permanent value, from which many reprints will be wanted, the cost can, if necessary, be written off over a period of five, seven, or ten years, but it should be written off in equal instalments, because to write off ten per cent each year does not mean, as so many people innocently imagine, that the whole amount will have disappeared in ten years. On the contrary, a third of it will still remain, and after yet another ten years only about ninety per cent of the original sum will have been written off. Unless they are already on a metal basis, all valuations of plant should now be drastically overhauled in view of the new processes which enable one to reproduce books of which no plant is available. This is a factor which even income-tax officials cannot ignore.

The overvaluation of copyrights was the pit into which many publishers of past generations fell. In those days, it was much more customary than at present to acquire copyrights for a lump-sum payment, and in such cases it was natural, and indeed often essential, to include a substantial item for copyrights in the balance-sheets. But the tradition has survived to an age when a publisher rarely, if ever, acquires any copyrights. An exclusive licence of the book rights for the duration of copyright may have some value for balance-sheet purposes, but the short leases with which a few of the larger fiction publishers seem to be satisfied most certainly have not. A wise plan is undoubtedly to place copyrights in the same category as good-will,

and to aim at treating both as hidden reserves rather than as realizable assets.[1]

Correspondence and callers occupy the greater part of the publisher's day. Both are at times apt to be overwhelming. To deal with correspondence effectively needs, above all qualifications, imagination. Few people seem to realize the importance of putting themselves in the position of the recipient of the letter. There is an inevitable tendency to assume that what is so familiar to you must be obvious to your correspondent, whereas to the inexperienced author, at any rate, all the technical terms used so lightly by the publisher or his assistant are mysterious hieroglyphics. In the turmoil of the day's work it is not always easy for the publisher to remember that to the author his book is 'the only pebble on the beach.' It may be extremely tiresome at times, but it is none the less natural, that authors should be curious to know everything about their offspring, and ever inclined, like an over-anxious mother, to suspect the worst. Mr. W. B. Maxwell has referred to the publisher's 'awful silence.' To some extent it is, I fear, inevitable, but I think something might be done to break it. One might, for instance, devise a printed card, the most appropriate sentence on which could be underlined. This might, however, arouse more suspicions than it would allay. Letters voluntarily giving information to authors easily become a terrible burden, but I agree with Mr. Maxwell that it is

[1] Another plan which has certain advantages is to value plates and copyrights together at a very conservative arbitrary figure, and to charge off to 'expense' all plates made thereafter so long as the business continues to grow. If it falls behind more must be charged off. — F. G.

well worth while for the publisher to write them, despite the fact that they almost always involve yet further correspondence. The trouble is that if you begin to give information to some authors, there is no end to explaining the information and why you gave it.

Much work can be saved by the use of 'form letters.' Any correspondence which is repetitive, such as letters sending proofs to an author, should be dealt with in this way. But if a letter is to be standardized, it should be given unusually careful thought. A 'form letter' need not necessarily be printed. In many cases it is better that it should not, but there is none the less an economy both in time and mental effort in using it.

There are many ways of declining manuscripts — some publishers take pains about how they do it, others do not. Personally, I think the way it is done is very important, because the communication will reach the author at a moment when he is likely to be particularly sensitive. At the same time it is seldom wise to give reasons for declining a manuscript. Nearly all would say they desired it, but four out of five would not only resent the explanation when given, but enter into an argument about it. Furthermore, it is wise to remember that though the decision was right, the reason for it may well have been wrong.

Callers are a very great problem: they can rob one of so much time. Many publishers, I believe, refuse to see any one except by appointment. This seems to me a mistake, and I can say with certainty that it would have lost me a good deal of business. On the other hand, some parts of the day must be kept sacred, and it seems to me indefensible to

expect to see a business man before he has had an opportunity of dealing with his morning's correspondence.

If the maximum is to be accomplished, the day's work must be carefully planned out; a certain amount of routine is essential. Contrary to the usual impression, the telephone is a great enemy of efficiency, and the extent to which it is abused, particularly by authors, is incredible. Information which cannot be given offhand should never, under ordinary circumstances, be demanded on the telephone; and it is surely unnecessary to insist upon asking the principal of the firm a question which could be equally as well and perhaps more promptly answered by a junior. Almost daily I find myself acting as a stenographer and taking down long messages or inquiries which the person at the other end of the telephone is too lazy or thoughtless to write. Would that authors might remember that an inquiry as to whether a review copy of their book has been sent to the 'Little Pemington Gazette,' if written on a postcard, can be answered without effort, whereas the same inquiry made through the telephone to the principal of a big publishing firm is like sand in a complicated machine.

The titles of books often present one of the most difficult problems a publisher has to face. In some cases, success or failure may depend upon the right choice. It is desirable both that the title should be short and that it should accurately describe the book, two conditions that frequently seem incompatible. The difficulty can sometimes be solved by the addition of a sub-title, which, if necessary, can be longer and convey a more exact idea of the contents. Fanciful titles which convey no meaning and might equally

well be used for almost any kind of book are invariably a mistake. Ruskin could use them with impunity, because people wanted to read his books regardless of what he called them, but lesser men should beware of following his example in that particular respect.

Although there is no copyright in titles, publishers do their utmost to avoid duplication, because of the confusion it is apt to cause. Unfortunately there is no register of titles, so that very often it is not until it is too late to change that the discovery is made that a title has previously been taken. If an author experiences difficulty in selecting a title, he will be well advised to supply the publisher with a long list of alternatives from which to make a selection. It may well be that not one in the list will be suitable as it stands, but the selection may suggest to the publisher some other really good name for the book. In the case of

Translations, the title is especially important. It is not always easy to follow the original as closely as might be desired. The rule should be to give the original title on the back, if not on the front, of the title-page, particularly if the English title leaves any doubt as to which particular work by the writer is being translated. The point is so easily overlooked that I would urge translators themselves to draw attention to the desirability of giving the fullest information upon such points as part of the bibliographical information the reader is entitled to expect. Until recently, the general standard of translations was deplorable, but in recent years there has been a marked improvement. It is now more fully realized that even the most perfect knowledge of a foreign language does not make one a good translator; that, in fact,

there is a definite technique to be mastered; that exceptional conscientiousness is called for, and that no one can be expected to make a really first-rate translation into any other language than his own mother tongue. The publication of translations is highly speculative, much more so than the publication of an original work, because there are in effect two authors to pay instead of one, and both, as a rule, call for immediate payment and are unable or unwilling to let their remuneration depend upon the result. Foreign authors and publishers who have heard of the wonderful sales of some particular translated book are apt to have the most fantastic ideas of the value of the English translation rights, and if the word 'America' is breathed, I have known foreign publishers name a figure for which one would think they would be pleased to sell their whole business. Even twenty years ago, translation rights were almost invariably sold for a small lump sum; to-day the most impossible royalties are asked. Probably the fairest plan to both parties is a lump sum for a definite number of copies with a royalty thereafter. It would seem to be clear that if a royalty is granted from the start, it should only be a proportion of what would be paid for an original work. In other words, there is no justification for paying a foreign author plus a translator more than would be paid for a corresponding work by an English author. This sounds obvious, but one constantly encounters publishers (American publishers in particular) who in the same breath admit that they cannot afford more than ten per cent royalty for a work by an unknown writer, and that they have just agreed to pay ten per cent for some translation rights of a work by

an author of whom few people have ever heard. They seem oblivious of the fact that by the time they have paid the translator they are probably paying the equivalent of twenty per cent for authorship. One such publisher recently admitted to me that he had never yet made any money on translations. I am afraid he never will.

Series have disadvantages as well as advantages. Many of the best have grown out of some successful book, and were not planned as series at all. A publisher finding himself unexpectedly successful with a book entitled 'Questions about X' will naturally follow it up with a book 'Questions about Y,' and almost before he knows it the 'Questions' series is in existence. Others, however, are planned and carefully thought out from the start, but many of the most pretentious schemes of that kind have come to an end with the failure of the first half-dozen titles. The existence of a series gives the publisher opportunities of publishing books which, issued by themselves, would be foredoomed to failure. An isolated volume on, let us say, Obadiah would stand a poor chance of success, but as one of a series of small books on the Minor Prophets it would probably receive attention. It is a very great temptation to a publisher to include a volume in a series, even if it is not entirely suited to it, because by so doing he knows he will be giving the book a better start. Probably this is partly responsible for the deterioration there is in almost every series. There are indeed few in which it is not noticeable. One of the exceptions is the Library of Philosophy, edited by Professor J. H. Muirhead, and the high standard that has been maintained is possibly due not only to the discernment of

the editor, but to the fact that his publishers left him free to veto any work that was not up to the required standard.

Censorship (except for the war period, when we were *all* under the tutelage of D.O.R.A.[1]) is a trouble with which British publishers are fortunately not afflicted; but the very absence of a censorship throws grave responsibilities upon the publishers themselves. The best firms use most careful judgment. Few who have not had the responsibility thrust upon them know how difficult it is to decide exactly what will be regarded at any given moment as permissible. Some things are a matter of custom, and customs change rapidly. Ideas which are universally accepted to-day would have horrified a previous generation. The publishers whose aim it is to cater for to-morrow rather than yesterday, and to give opportunities for the expression of new ideas, is confronted with the whole problem in its acutest form. Most publishers are extremely timid in facing authority; but if you are satisfied that what you are doing is right and fully justified, there would seem to be no reason, in England at any rate, for timidity, whatever governmental pressure may be brought to bear.

One of my own experiences in this connection was very amusing. Just over ten years ago, shortly after the 'Rainbow' prosecution, I was visited by an emissary from Scotland Yard, who said they had received a complaint concerning one of our publications. He mentioned, I remember, that our author had overstepped the mark, and added that he had been instructed by his chief to call and see whether we would withdraw the book. I immediately took

[1] Defense of the Realm Act.

a piece of paper and pencil and asked the inspector if he would be good enough to let me know what the exact message was — were we instructed to withdraw it, requested to do so, or was it merely a polite hope that we might? I then warned him that what he said would be brought up in evidence against him. The effect of that last statement was instantaneous. The inspector had evidently been so accustomed to say these words to other people that he was painfully disturbed at having them administered to himself. He was visibly relieved when I later suggested that I had better see his chief. Before his departure, I had taken the precaution of transcribing into a copy of the book the markings which had been made in the copy in his possession. These markings were most instructive. Most of the passages were single-lined, a few double-lined. One of the latter passages puzzled me greatly, because I could not see upon what ground even an official could take exception to it.

At Scotland Yard I produced the paper on which I had taken down the message given me by the inspector and inquired whether it was correct. I was informed that the inspector had overstepped the mark, which, as I was able to point out, was precisely what he had said our author had done. I then inquired whether it was realized:

(*a*) That the offending book had been published seven years.
(*b*) That it had been published by two other firms before we took it over.
(*c*) That it was in its third edition.
(*d*) That the author had only recently received from nearly all the leading literary people in the country a most wonderful testimonial on the occasion of his birthday.

I then asked what was wrong with the particular passage that had been doubly underlined. The official read it and replied that he regarded it as very serious, and when I asked him why, found that he had attributed to it precisely the opposite meaning to what the very clear wording indicated. When I pointed this out to him, he at once admitted the mistake, and was honest enough to add that he was dealing with so much evil that he tended to see it where it did not exist. When he added that he did not intend to prosecute, I am afraid I replied that I wished he would, as I should like the people who had signed the testimonial (of which I then handed him a copy) to know what he thought about the book. Half unconsciously he added that if it came under D.O.R.A. he would prosecute. But it did not come under D.O.R.A. The probable explanation of the incident, which was very instructive, was that the absence of any legal or other difficulty in securing the immediate suppression of the 'Rainbow,' and the consciousness of D.O.R.A. in the background, led the authorities to act a little more rashly than they would have done in normal circumstances. They were taking anonymous complaints much too seriously, and had succeeded with some publishers in getting books suppressed without any one hearing about it, a real grievance, by the way, for the authors, who were surely entitled to be heard. In our case nothing further happened, save that, as the result of my call, the waiting-room accommodation at New Scotland Yard was improved, and visitors are no longer kept standing in a cold and draughty corridor.

Despite the foregoing experience, and others of a less or

more amusing character, I have no hesitation in saying that the English system, or lack of system, works very satisfactorily in practice. It would be a splendid thing if officials, and for that matter all those who call out from time to time for censorship, could be made to learn Milton's 'Areopagitica' by heart. For the rest, public opinion will do all that is necessary as far as serious publications are concerned. Apart from all other considerations, it never in the long run pays a reputable publisher to 'overstep the mark.' Both the book trade and the public would soon let him know if he did, and as often as not before the authorities had time to intervene.

At this point a reference to the so-called 'banning' of books by the circulating libraries is appropriate. Both the extent and the effect of the action taken by these libraries are apt to be exaggerated. In the management of their business they have to consider the requirements of their customers. If a given book is likely to offend the large majority of their clientèle it is obvious that they must take steps to see that only the small minority see it and that no copy inadvertently reaches any of the others. This is achieved by the simple expedient of deciding that such a book shall not be supplied unless specifically asked for. It certainly limits the circulation of such a book to those likely to appreciate it, but cannot be termed a censorship. There is no ground for the suggestion often made by authors that the fate of their work will necessarily be made or marred by the attitude of the circulating libraries, most of which are merely seeking in this matter to carry out their customers' wishes.

The methods of attracting new business are manifold, but the best of all is the recommendation of satisfied authors; it is the kind of testimonial that can be bought only with service — by work faithfully, conscientiously, and efficiently done. Some publishers feel it essential to take advantage of social functions of every kind to extend their connections. It is an excellent method, particularly for the bachelor publisher without home responsibilities. Another effective plan is, by wide reading of serious periodicals of every kind, to observe who are the coming men and what are the coming subjects before they have arrived. My predecessors published Freud's 'Interpretation of Dreams' several years before psychoanalysis became a household word, and we more or less commissioned the first popular book on the subject over a twelvemonth before the boom came. When, during the war, my firm reissued Kant's 'Perpetual Peace' and published books on the League of Nations, it was regarded as a pro-German activity. Scarcely any copies of Baudouin's 'Suggestion and Autosuggestion' were sold during the first three months following publication. Brooks's 'Practice of Autosuggestion' — of which about 160,000 copies were sold here and in America — was definitely commissioned to meet the demand for a cheaper and more popular book that Baudouin's was certain to arouse.

Specialization often helps in the development of a business. It is comparatively easy, sometimes, to get a sort of corner in the best books on a certain subject, and when once that is achieved most of the other good books on the subject are likely to come your way.

The starting of series, the commissioning of authors to write books for you, are other plans adopted to increase business, and there is also the alternative, more favoured by some publishers than others, of turning to literary agents for assistance. There remains also poaching — or paying others to poach for you if you have any qualms about doing it for yourself. No doubt I am old-fashioned, but this method seems to me to lower the dignity of the profession. The ideal to be aimed at is surely that described by the late Mr. Henry Holt, who, when speaking of American publishing in the seventies, wrote:

> All those old publishers — Putnam, Appleton, Harper, and Scribner — were incapable of petty or ostentatious things, and were much more inclined to friendly coöperation and mutual concession than to barbarous competition. The spectacle of a crowd of other men making fools of themselves exercised upon them no temptation to do as the herd did. No one of them, or of a few more, would go for another's author any more than for his watch; or, if he had got entangled with another's author through some periodical or other outside right, would no more hold on to him than to the watch if the guard had got caught on a button. They were wonderfully kind to me as a young fellow, and their kindness and example have been of inestimable value all my life.

If we cannot live up to such a standard to-day we might, at any rate, bear it in mind.

Unprofitable books. A problem that confronts every serious publisher is what to do with the many first-rate and learned books which cry aloud for publication, but which it is certain will have an insufficient sale to pay their way. In olden days, nearly all the better firms of publishers con-

sidered themselves under an obligation to issue such books so far as their means justified them in so doing. It was often possible for them to do much in this way to foster learning, because if any of their more popular books were particularly successful the bulk of the profits came their way. To-day, with sliding-scale royalties the author reaps the fruits of any exceptional success. This is quite as it should be, but it sets a very definite limit upon what even the most public-spirited publisher can do in the way of financing unprofitable undertakings. The 'newest rich,' as Mr. Ivor Brown [1] terms the lucky and skilful modern writers whose incomes vastly exceed that of any book publisher past or present, show as yet no sign of any willingness to assume the obligations previously borne by many publishers out of the exceptional profits now enjoyed by some authors. Ought it not to be suggested to successful authors that they have a duty to perform in this respect? Have we not every reason to expect them to be at least equally as generous in their patronage of literature as the best publishers in the past?

[1] *Vide Manchester Guardian*, March 27, 1926.

CHAPTER XI

PUBLISHING AS A PROFESSION

THE foregoing chapters will have convinced my readers that book publishing is not such a simple task as is usually thought. Despite the current impression to the contrary, neither a pass degree at Oxford or Cambridge nor even literary ability is a sufficient qualification. Manifold technical knowledge and commercial acumen are essential. Furthermore, it will usually be found that the most able and successful publishers have been right through the business from start to finish, and therefore can, from personal knowledge, check and follow all the work, including the various processes of production. The knowledge that is needed cannot be acquired in a day nor yet a year, and it is often not till after a wide experience of ten or fifteen years that a publisher realizes most keenly how much there is still to learn. It is only the man who has never mastered his job who is sure that he knows all there is to know about it.

The monetary return is in few cases commensurate with the labour expended. It is, in fact, much more difficult to 'make good' in publishing than is commonly supposed. It is perhaps interesting in this connection to compare some amounts recently left by publishers, authors, booksellers, literary agents, and newspaper proprietors.

Publishers:

John Lane, £12,000.
Wm. Heinemann, £33,000.
J. M. Dent, £14,000.

Booksellers:

J. J. Banks (Cheltenham), £35,000.
B. H. Blackwell (Oxford), £54,000.

Authors:

Charles Garvice, £71,000.
Rider Haggard, £61,000.

Author-journalist:

Sir Henry Lucy (Toby, M.P.), £250,000.

Literary agents:

J. B. Pinker, £40,000.
A. P. Watt, £60,000.

Weekly newspaper proprietor:

Sir William Ingram, Bt. ('Illustrated London News,' etc.), £265,000.

Provincial newspaper owner:

J. J. Riley ('Southport Guardian'), £40,000.[1]

This is by no means conclusive evidence, but it does demonstrate very clearly that the owners of such well-known and famous publishing houses as those of John Lane and J. M. Dent & Sons are not necessarily the enormously wealthy people they are usually reputed to be. It is probably true that any one who could make money at book publishing could make more in other businesses; and to the beginner who asks for advice, one is safe in replying,

[1] During the brief, indecent period in which individual United States income-tax payments were printed in the daily press, there was evidence that the comparative gains of popular authors, book publishers, and newspaper owners were in much the same ratio as in England. — F. G.

'Do not go into publishing if money-making is your chief objective. Publishing has rewards to offer far greater than money. A decent enough living can be made at it, if you have really mastered the technique and have the necessary aptitude; but your day's work will never be done, and it is possible that the better work you do, the less *monetary* reward you will receive.'

It seems necessary to emphasize this side of publishing, because of the exaggerated ideas that are prevalent. Fortunes made by publishers in other days are attributed to the present time, when quite other conditions prevail, and it is wrongly assumed that what happened in the past happens in the present. But there is likewise exaggeration of the opposite kind. The view of those who have put their money into publishing and lost it, that in no circumstances can a publishing business be made to pay its way, is as erroneous as that of the disappointed author who regards every publisher as a potential millionaire.

Many publishing businesses are endowed by foolish people. If a publisher who is in low water advertises that a directorship or partnership is available to any one introducing capital, he will be inundated with offers, mostly from fond parents who want their sons to start as directors instead of going right through the business.

The number of publishing houses in England (or even in such a big country as America) is extremely limited, but the attractions of publishing as a profession are such that scarcely a week goes by without every firm of repute receiving applications from men just down from the universities, anxious to adopt it as a career. In common with

most publishers, I have interviewed scores of such applicants. A few are genuinely keen, and are ready to make some sacrifice to qualify themselves, but for the most part they appear to think publishing a 'soft job' which consists of reading an occasional manuscript. In practice, what seems to happen is that the young man is asked by his father what he would like to be, and replies that he does not know. When questioned what he is interested in, he perhaps replies he likes reading. It is then assumed he ought to be a publisher.

I emphasize the point, because its effect upon publishing is, in my judgment, disastrous. It enables the most hopelessly inefficient and incompetent firms to prolong their existence and confronts the efficient publisher with the most difficult form of competition. There is the case of the firm which had over £60,000 poured into the business by a succession of partners. These sudden accessions of capital (on which interest had to be paid) prompted the undertaking of many doubtful ventures, and necessitated the payment of a substantial salary to the incoming partner, who, in most cases, brought no qualifications with him other than his money. Regarded from the purely financial point of view, this is apt to be a most extravagant way of raising capital. The partner contributes, let us say, £5000, and is given six per cent debentures, calling for £300 per annum interest. In addition, he is paid a salary of £400 or £500 a year, whereas on his own merits he might not be worth anything at all. Thus over fifteen per cent may be paid for the additional capital, a rate that is obviously crippling. After the lapse of a few years the partner may have learned some-

thing about the business and be able to earn his salary, but by that time most of his £5000 will have been paid out in interest and salary, and the firm will once again be complaining of lack of capital. Another partner is then sought and the process is repeated. Among those to introduce money in this way will be bankers, solicitors, and business men. They will take what seem to them to be the very greatest precautions, the books of the firm will be examined by chartered accountants and a certified balance-sheet demanded; but, as will have been seen in the last chapter, it will be of no avail if the valuation of the stock, plant, and copyrights has not been carefully checked. That is a problem beyond the competence of an ordinary chartered accountant, and even the certificates of some of the professional valuers are worse than useless. A point to be remembered is that *bona fide* openings seldom occur. The firm that is prosperous and well managed does not, in normal circumstances, require additional capital. The firms that most want it are usually among those to whom it is least safe to entrust it.

So much for the difficulties of entering already established publishing businesses; there remains the alternative of starting a fresh one. To judge by the number of firms that spring up like mushrooms, it might be thought the easiest method. In fact, the difficulties are overwhelming. Of the many that start, few survive seven years, unless the founder had already made a success of the management of some other firm. Of the others, practically none hold out beyond seven years without obtaining further capital to carry them along. The reasons are obvious to those with

publishing experience. The working expenses have to be borne by a very small list of books, mostly obtained in keen competition with older houses. It is almost inevitable that some of the books will be failures; and, unless there is some exceptional piece of good luck, the profits on the others will not meet the office expenses — without taking into consideration the drawings of the partners or interest on capital. Unless the amount provided is much more than is usually the case, this process and the cost of producing new books will soon exhaust the initial capital, and from that moment onwards a struggle begins, which may be temporarily mitigated by the securing of additional money, on which further interest has to be paid. When the end comes, the founders realize, though all too late, that they have merely been living on their capital.

In practice, it may often be less risky to purchase the assets of an existing business, however derelict, provided the price paid is not too high; because, if the business has been established any length of time, it will have accumulated at any rate a few publications with a steady sale, and these, together with the profits on the disposal of the old stock (if bought at a reasonable figure), should go some way towards meeting the working expenses while a new list is being built up. Here again, however, experience is essential, because so much turns upon the ability to realize old stock to the greatest advantage. Lest there should be those who think it is merely a case of providing enough capital, I may be forgiven for mentioning a recent instance where over £30,000 was put into a new firm and irretrievably lost in less than three years. There is no short cut. In

recent times, at any rate, no successful business has been established by any publisher who has not first acquired the necessary technical knowledge. This is a point that has to be emphasized to all entering a publishing office.

Those who have read the earlier chapters will have gained some idea of the many qualifications which contribute to a publisher's success. Here I will merely refer to two which might otherwise be overlooked: both are of great importance. The first is experience of the actual selling of books to the public (in a retail bookshop) and to booksellers (as a publisher's traveller). The publisher who has had neither of these experiences is sadly handicapped in gauging either trade requirements or the commercial merits of manuscripts which come his way.

The second is memory, which occupies a more important place in a publisher's work than in most other businesses. However carefully the business is organized, however perfect the systems introduced, much will depend upon the publisher's memory. The value of his experience rests largely upon his recollection of the literature of any subject and the record of success or failure that has attended, not only his own, but other people's publications. There is all the difference in the world between a decision based upon your own prejudices and one founded upon an accurate recollection of the history of a number of other books on the same subject and a knowledge of the markets requiring them. In brief, however many precautions are taken to avoid any reliance upon memory; there can be few occupations which tax it so greatly or in which it is such a valuable asset.

Book publishing is a very personal business, and that is one of its fascinations: the personal element therefore is one of the biggest factors. We have already seen that a publisher's own inclinations determine the selection of the manuscripts chosen for publication. They will likewise have a decisive effect upon the character of the business. The publisher who rates size above quality, outward success above the judgment of the cultured minority, and who regards publishing as primarily a commercial venture, will inevitably gravitate towards what are know as' big fiction' and 'big memoirs': in other words, the publication of works by authors whose reputations have been made and whose works are certain to have a large sale. Seeking to reap where others have sown, such firms tend to be less scrupulous in the methods they adopt to secure the transfer of competitors' authors to their list, and it is to them that literary agents most readily turn. At one time the current flowed strongly in their direction, but the tide has now turned, and many of the more discriminating authors have come to realize that better service can be obtained from publishers who can give personal attention to their work than from firms where it will of necessity be merely one of a long list. The day of gauging a publisher's merits by the extent to which he will gamble on 'advance payments' in anticipation of royalties is passing. Big fiction and cheap fiction certainly figure largely in most people's minds; but, judged by any other standard than 'turnover,' they form but a small proportion of books published.

The control of a publishing business gives unique opportunities for self-expression. If the publisher happens

to be interested in technical matters, it is very easy for him to develop a technical side to his business; again, if he is interested in medicine, law, architecture, or any other subject, his business can be led into these channels. But for the most part each house has its own tradition behind it, and any sudden departure from that tradition is likely to prove disastrous. If a firm which for several generations has specialized in nothing but theology suddenly takes to the issuing of fiction, the result will not be good either for its theological list or for its fiction. On the other hand, the merging of several publishers' lists will leave a firm with several traditions behind it, of each of which advantage can be taken.

Probably the most satisfactory feature of any publishing business is a good educational side, because, if the list contains many books that are 'set,' those books will continue to sell almost regardless of how the business is run. Many a firm must have depended for its very existence upon its educational list. But there are grave disadvantages as well as advantages in connection with educational publications. In the first place, the work comes in spurts: the orders pour in at certain periods of the year; at these times the publisher's staff has more than it can cope with, whereas a few weeks later there may not be enough to do. Then again, although all is plain sailing when once a book is 'set,' it is apt to be extremely difficult to get a book adopted, and the margin on new educational books is too meagre to cover many failures.

In England (not in America), 'juveniles' are apt to be one of the most unsatisfactory branches of publishing.

There are, of course, any number of individual exceptions: innumerable cases where, because of the sheer merit of the book, it has made its way into permanent favour regardless of all the difficulties. But competition in the 'juvenile' field is particularly keen, and there is a deplorable tendency to judge the value of children's books by their bulk and the number of illustrations, rather than by the intrinsic merits of the text or the quality of the artist's work. Many of the big buyers of 'juveniles' purchase them in hundreds assorted at a given price, and will not be bothered with isolated books. It is, of course, only by production in large quantities that such astoundingly good value can be given. This makes it difficult for the publisher who eschews mass production and aims at high quality of text and illustration to publish at a price which will stand comparison with the results of mass production. The time will no doubt come when parents will be prepared to give as much thought to the mental food of their children as they do, let us say, to the choice of a new dress or a new suit of clothes. When that time comes, the courageous publisher of really good children's books will reap his reward; but in the meantime parents, governesses, aunts, and nurses are still far too much hypnotized by the outward appearance of children's books to make the 'juvenile' publisher's task an easy one.

As I have mentioned the extent to which a publisher's personal inclination may influence the character of his list. I should like to refer to the all-too-prevalent idea that a publisher must, or should, approve of all the opinions expressed in his publications. This is an absurd notion, and

if carried to its logical conclusion would reduce a publisher to issuing nothing but multiplication tables and books written by himself.

Censorship (except of the libellous and obscene) ill becomes a publisher; the more limited responsibility for seeing that the matter is reasonably well and clearly expressed is quite sufficient. In fact, I regard the publication of controversial books as a specially important part of a general publisher's function. What better way is there of securing deliberate and thorough investigation of new ideas and unpopular opinions? The enemy of subversive thought is not suppression, but publication: truth has no need to fear the light of day; fallacies wither under it. The unpopular views of to-day are the commonplaces of to-morrow, and in any case the wise man wants to hear both sides of every question. Publication winnows the grain of truth from the chaff of prejudice and superstition, and it is the publisher's duty to help this process by maintaining an open forum.

Partly perhaps because of my interest in controversial literature, the lot of the general publisher with a varied range of interests seems to me the most enviable one, particularly if his list is dominated by the ideas of to-morrow rather than those of yesterday. His work brings him into close touch with the intellectual life of his time, affords wide scope for initiative, and gives endless opportunities to help the cause of progress. Much is written of the power of the press, a power which may last but a day; by comparison, little is heard of the power of books, which may endure for generations. The feeling that one may be building with

permanent materials, the knowledge that one's name is associated with books that enshrine profound thought and the triumphs of the creative imagination add a fascination to the best publishing. To offer the public just what it wants, to pander to the worst prejudices of the moment, may be the speediest way to profits, here as elsewhere; but it is a dull road to follow. Publishing has far more thrilling adventures to offer the man who is ready to accompany pioneers along fresh paths; eager to help blaze a trail through ignorance and prejudice; anxious that, above all, the lamp of truth should be kept burning. It may not yield the same monetary reward, but it will afford a satisfaction no money can buy. If you are a student and lover of human nature in all its amazing variety, where will you have such an opportunity of gratifying your desire as in publishing? Among authors, you will meet the very perfect gentleman and his exact reverse; you will encounter the colossal egotist who claims his manuscript as opening a new era, the learned man of humble spirit, and all shades and patterns between. As the years pass, some of your clients become your personal friends, and to their confidence you are able to respond in ways that surpass the strict limits of business.

Is it surprising that so many active minds with an idealistic strain should hasten to join our ranks? But I must repeat what I have been saying all along, that the man who enters upon book publishing without being well grounded in all its prosaic and tedious details, complex organization, and financial bearings, is only inviting disaster. Such a grounding cannot be acquired from a book. My object in

any case is not to teach publishing, but to give, out of a somewhat varied and unusual experience, some information that authors and all concerned with the book craft should possess. There is much more that might be said, and probably much that might be said better, but I hope that I have in some measure succeeded in my task.

THE END

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